RACE WAR IN HIGH SCHOOL

Harold Saltzman

The Ten–Year Destruction of
Franklin K. Lane High School
in Brooklyn

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For my students and colleagues at
FRANKLIN K. LANE HIGH SCHOOL

Preface

As this book is published, we are getting ready to witness the great American spectacle that we will later call "The Making of a President—1972." While the economy and Vietnam would appear to hold center stage, there simmers barely beneath the surface *that other issue*—the burning question of forced busing as a tool to integrate the nation's public schools. In the early years of this decade, no conflict touched the sensitivities of more Americans, and more confounded, angered, frightened, and divided us, than did the struggle over mixing children to achieve *racial balance* in our schools.

From George Wallace's Alabama to Nelson Rockefeller's New York; from Pontiac, Michigan, to San Francisco; in Richmond and in Boston, Detroit, and Indianapolis; north and south, east and west; in the cities and in the suburbs; Americans are torn between Supreme Court rulings legitimizing the forced busing of children and presidential edicts that would forbid the use of federal funds to carry it out. And our national conscience is tested as never before as we strain to reconcile what we know is right with the realities that tell us it is so very wrong.

What have been the realities of integration? And why have so many decent law-abiding Americans gone to extremes to prevent their children from being bused to achieve some nebulous goal called racial balance? What has actually happened in the integrated schools? And why, in 1972, has race become the predominant concern of the school-connected constituency throughout the land?

This work was undertaken to tell what happened at just one of the countless American schools where integration *didn't* work. Didn't work because those who posed as the champions of justice wouldn't let it. The cast of characters in the tragic story of Franklin K. Lane High School, an integrated public high school in Brooklyn, New York, includes militant black students, panic-stricken whites, opportunistic politicians, adult agitators, irresponsible school bureaucrats, and angry teachers —all caught up in a conflagration of their own making and rendered helpless to control events leading to the destruction of the educational process. Parenthetically but not accidentally, John Lindsay's emergence as a national figure, rising majestically out of the ashes of New York's school wars, makes the Lane story ever more significant.

Change the city and the names, and *Race War in High School* could be a case study of a conflict that has occurred and will reoccur in hundreds of schools where the issues of race and education collide. This is the sad conclusion of a 1970 report issued by the Policy Institute of the Syracuse University Research Corporation for the United States Office of Education:

> One cannot visit urban high schools and not be directly aware of the clashes produced by mixing large numbers of young people and adults who come from very different neighborhoods, very different racial and ethnic strands, and very different age brackets. . . . Disruption is positively related to integration. We found that much of the physical fighting, the extortion, the bullying in and around schools had a clear racial basis . . .

The author would confess at the outset that his work is *definitely* a biased one—biased against hate, crime, terror, and all forms of physical and psychological abuse perpetrated by one group against another. The events are described as they happened. Names were *not* changed to protect the innocent—or the guilty. The analyses of these events stem in large part from the author's own experiences as a participant in the story, and he willingly assumes the responsibility for conclusions that may be distasteful, indeed bitter, to some readers.

This project could never have succeeded without the encouragement and support of numerous educators, government officials, and civic leaders who submitted to the interview process and supplied a voluminous amount of resource material. Special appreciation is owed James Baumann, William Hoffman, and Frank Siracusa—colleagues who provided much-needed documentation from their own records. Dr. Samuel D. McClelland of the New York City Bureau of Educational Research facilitated the collection of statistical data—with a minimum of red tape. School secretaries Sylvia Ehrlich, Helen Levenson, Bertha Brownstein, and Martha Dacher searched out records and reports long buried in dust-covered files. An immeasurable motivation was, and remains, the urgings of my colleagues to undertake and persist in the venture. Finally, there was the patient understanding of Mary Jo Saltzman, who endured long periods of inattention as only a loving wife could.

January, 1972
New York City

All that is necessary for the forces of evil to triumph is for enough good men to do nothing!

Edmund Burke, 1729–97

Chapter 1

The Burning

Frank Siracusa made a point of coming to school early. He lived with his wife and year-old daughter in a modest four-room apartment only a few short blocks from Franklin K. Lane High School, which straddles the border between Brooklyn and Queens in New York City. He had become accustomed to rolling out of bed at 7:30 A.M. and taking the two-minute walk to the school he had taught in since 1961. Siracusa was a thirty-year-old chemistry teacher with a jovial personality that made him a favorite among students and colleagues alike. There weren't many people on the 306-member faculty who were more popular than Frank Siracusa, and there was no reason for him to suspect that January 20, 1969, would be different from any other Monday morning.

In addition to his duties as a chemistry instructor, Siracusa doubled as the coordinator for school aides, the corps of thirty-four nonprofessional adults who helped supervise students in the school cafeteria, study rooms, and hallways. The police had been on duty at the school all of the previous week as a result of an agreement between District 19 Superintendent Elizabeth

C. O'Daly and the school's chapter of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the union representing the city's 60,000 teachers. There had been fifteen separate incidents of assault against white teachers by black students, and an even larger number of vicious and sadistic attacks by blacks against white students. It was all part of the aftermath of the Great School Strike which had ended just two months earlier.

But January 20, 1969, was to be a very different kind of day for Frank Siracusa, one that would see his picture on the front page of newspapers across the country and would raise serious doubts about integration in the nation's public schools. Siracusa, very much involved with the life of the school, was a member of the school's UFT executive committee and had been a recent speaker at a meeting of the Woodhaven-Cypress Hills Community Association. The association was a newly formed neighborhood group that came together to protest the growth of racial violence at the local high school. At its January 17 meeting, Siracusa had been one of the first speakers to expose the lawlessness which had become prevalent at Lane.

On the morning of January 20 Siracusa clocked in and went through his usual routine of checking the school aide roster and getting his materials in order for his first period class. It was only minutes before his morning class was scheduled to assemble when a stone came crashing through the window, shattering the glass and scattering fragments to all corners of his first-floor classroom. Cautiously, he approached the window, wary of yet another missile. Looking out at the courtyard he observed two black youths, about eighteen years of age: they were decked out in fashionable *dashikis* and sported the hairdo which had become the sign of black militancy. Siracusa thought about reporting the incident through the usual administrative channels, or of overlooking the matter entirely. Either way, the result would have been the same . . . the absence of any official response to student violence.

Many of his colleagues had, in fact, already thrown in the towel. They had been told to avoid confrontations with students. Don't enforce the rules where black students are concerned, they were continually advised. Let the blacks "do their own thing!" Don't compel them to produce identification cards! Don't require them to stand for the morning pledge of allegiance exercise even though it is required by state law! Don't make an issue over their refusal to remove their hats in the school building! And above all, remember these are changing times and are you sure you don't harbor racist attitudes? In a variety of ways, sometimes subtle, sometimes more direct, most of Lane's teachers had gotten that message from its own administration and from the central school board. In this turbulent era, the New York City school board wasn't even backing up its own principals. At any given time there were more than twenty of them cooling their heels at board headquarters after having been "promoted" to a desk job at 110 Livingston Street as a result of pressure from black militants. If a principal couldn't expect the support of the school board on matters related to fundamental school discipline (no less violence and lawlessness), it followed that a principal wouldn't put his own neck on the line by sustaining a teacher who was foolish enough to try to break up a dice game or report a drug transaction on school premises. The name of the game for Lane's teachers had become, "mind your own business and don't get involved" because, they learned, in New York's tempestuous school system the axe most often fell not on the incompetent but on the dedicated teacher who tried to do an honest job for his day's pay.

But at Franklin K. Lane High School, and at countless other schools throughout the city, teachers were learning to look the other way. After all, if Mayor John V. Lindsay could tell the police to ignore the looting of stores during the Harlem riots and to do nothing while local residents carted off color TV sets, then it was perfectly clear that teachers couldn't engage in parapolice activities and expect the city's support. But Frank Siracusa was one of the few who hadn't been jaded by the strange thinking that permeated the highest levels of officialdom. Totally devoted to his school and its students, how could he ignore this transgression and maintain his self-respect? He put on his overcoat, descended the stairway adjacent to his room, and went on out to the courtyard. Slowly, he approached the two tall youngsters who by now were joined by a third youth, somewhat shorter and younger, but with as menacing a veneer as the older pair.

"I'm Mr. Siracusa," he said quietly. "I'm a teacher, not a cop, and I would like to know who broke my window."

There was no reply, no discussion, not even a denial or argument. In a flash, one of the youngsters drew a water pistol from his jacket pocket, spraying the teacher's outer garments with a liquid which was later discovered to be a highly flammable lighter fluid. Siracusa was befuddled.

"What's this all about?" he thought to himself.

For a brief moment Siracusa figured it to be a juvenile prank, unaware that one of the trio was circling behind him. Suddenly, he felt a thunderous blow crashing into his spine. As he dropped to the ground, anguishing in pain, defenseless, he felt the smashing of fists against his jaw and the pounding of booted heels into his groin. Lying helpless on the cold concrete, barely conscious, he sensed the burning flames from his overcoat which had been set afire by his assailants, who then left him there as a potential immolation fatality. Desperately, he struggled to get out of the overcoat, which was soon fully ablaze. Although suffering excruciating pain from the pounding he had received, Siracusa miraculously crawled out of the burning garment, and screaming for help, was found and carried to safety by colleagues responding to his cries.

A brand new chapter had been written into the annals of racial strife in the public schools, less than fifteen years after the United States Supreme Court spoke out against the doctrine of racial separatism in public educational systems.

Before the ambulance arrived to take him to the hospital, Siracusa, was emotionally overwrought and physically incapacitated.

Neither a personal visit by the mayor himself, nor the one by City Comptroller Mario Procaccino (campaigning hard for the Democratic party's mayoral nomination), nor a special delivery message of condolence by school board president John Doar, nor the bouquet of flowers from UFT president Albert Shanker . . . none of these gestures comforted Frank Siracusa in his moment of grief. The physical pain he was enduring was made more unbearable by the humiliation he felt. He was an excellent teacher, one who had tried to perform his duties professionally, with compassion and sensitivity. And now this! At his bedside at the La Guardia Hospital in Queens, Mayor John Lindsay expressed his regrets.

"Unbelievably outrageous,"*[1] His Honor announced, while Comptroller Procaccino told the ailing teacher, "Don't worry Frank, we'll get those . . ."

He was wrong, for the perpetrators were never found.

But even more outrageous than the burning were the circumstances that had led up to it. If the incident of January 20 was a fantastic occurrence, the road to it was even more unbelievable. Who was responsible? How could this have happened? These were the questions all New Yorkers were asking themselves as Frank Siracusa lay in that hospital bed, he too searching for some explicable rationale for the dastardly crime that had victimized him.

The Great School Strike of 1968 had ended on November 19 after 90 percent of the system's 60,000 pedagogical employees and most of its 1.2 million students had been out for thirty-six days. What had started the previous spring as a localized conflict had erupted in the fall into a citywide issue when Mayor Lindsay and the central school board refused to back up a decision of an impartial board-appointed arbitrator who ruled that Unit Administrator Rhody McCoy and the local board of the predominantly black Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district had acted illegally in terminating the employment of nineteen union teachers. Throughout the fall of 1968, and even after two aborted settlements, the battle raged—in many areas of the city reducing itself to a naked black-white struggle between parents in the impoverished ghettos and the striking teachers.

The aftermath of the Great School Strike was almost as bitter. The Afro-American Teachers Association (ATA), claiming in its membership 4,000 of the city's 6,000 black teachers, had actively and forcefully opposed the union's strike. The ATA gave over a portion of its office space in Brooklyn's Bedford-

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*Notes are at end of chapter.

Stuyvesant ghetto to its youth corps, the Afro-American Students Association (ASA). From the overworked mimeograph machines at 1064 Fulton Street came a steady stream of diatribe against the union and the terms of the strike-ending settlement which added nine days to the school year and extended the regular school day by forty minutes to provide make-up instruction, enabling striking teachers to earn back the pay they had lost. But the militant black teachers, who had opened up schools and were paid during the strike, and their student compatriots, were hardly about to cooperate with the terms of the agreement. The November edition of the ASA *Newsletter* offered a hint of what was to come:

> The UFT is coming back,
> So are we, strong and black
> The UFT smiles for they are sly,
> We won't forget their remarks and let them go by
>
> We now know who is with us and our friends,
> Those pigs we once trusted and their fiends
> Black students will get together and unite,
> Our demands will be met or else we fight
> No more bull about the good rule,
> Time for us to do something about our school.[2]

Leslie Campbell, a teacher at Junior High School 271 in the Ocean Hill District, an ATA vice president, and a notorious provocateur of student violence, had helped in the organization and indoctrination of Lane's impressionable black students. Campbell was a separatist who had preached black self-determination. He had become the idol of frustrated youths into whose minds was fed a hodgepodge of Maoist dogma, Black Panther ideology, and all the catchy slogans about American imperialism, white slave-driving businessmen, and the genocide that the government is carrying forth against the black people of America.

The Lane chapter of the UFT registered its objections to the distribution in school of inflammatory literature in a note to the principal, Morton Selub. As was his custom, the school head never responded to the UFT protest, preferring to sidestep an issue that could conceivably force him to make a decision that would be unpopular to the militants.

On November 27 the school was besieged with its first major confrontation. Student demonstrators had been roaming the city streets all week, going from school to school, upsetting the educational tone and calling on students to join with them in protesting the make-up time which they felt was discriminatory against them. At 3:00 P.M., after most of the early-session students and teachers had left for the day, a marauding band of about 150 black youths, many wielding knives, sticks, and chains, invaded the school. Several teachers were set upon when they tried to contain small groups of outsiders who went on a rampage all over the building. Steve Margolis, an assistant dean, attempting to aid a teacher being assaulted, was knocked to the floor, his glasses broken, his face lacerated and jacket torn to shreds directly in front of the principal's office. Frightened Lane students were sent fleeing into the street as classes were canceled for the remainder of the day. It was a dramatic introduction, and it would get worse. Much worse!

The question of just who was responsible for the security of Lane's students was a matter constantly under debate between the union chapter and the school administration. The UFT had always maintained that the teacher's job was to teach, not to perform police or parapolice functions. It had become traditional at Lane for the principal to assign large numbers of extra teachers to toilet duty, hall patrols, and street guarding toward the end of every semester and just prior to extended holiday recesses. These were times when student drunkenness was not at all uncommon, when drug usage (already widespread at Lane) became an especially difficult problem, and when the gangster element declared open season on defenseless teachers and students.

Reluctantly, teachers had come to insist that they were not trained to cope with criminally inclined students in situations which called for professional police attention. Confronting a drunken student or one shot full of heroin (or suffering withdrawal) was outside the purview of responsibility with which teachers could be reasonably charged. Such situations were not, the union contended, within the normal scope of internal school discipline. Criminal activity on school premises; assaults, vandalism, extortion, theft, arson . . . were all felonious crimes demanding police involvement. But on this very matter, principal Morton Selub stood intransigent. Under no circumstances would he ask for the assignment of police *inside* the building. His was the traditional pedagogical view which blindly refused to concede, no matter how overt the evidence, that conditions within a school could be so dangerous as to warrant the presence of police as a deterrent. A week rarely passed, from the delayed opening of school in November to the burning incident in January, in which the UFT chapter committee didn't meet with Selub, requesting, pleading, finally demanding police protection for students and teachers.

The principal could not be convinced. It didn't seem to matter that the school had become a house of horrors, racial fires brightly burning, as well as a haven for a huge drug addict population which preyed on innocent children in the student body . . . robbing, extorting, assaulting. A top-ranking official of the city's Addiction Services Agency later told a special UFT Narcotics Committee that there were enough hard-core drug users at Lane alone to require the full-time services of the agency's entire staff.

Morton Selub was not alone in trying to keep the police out of Lane. William Cerrone, captain of the overworked and undermanned 75th police precinct in Brooklyn, concurred with the principal. First, he didn't have the manpower to assign patrolmen within the building. But more important to him was the fear that if stationed *inside* the school, policemen would find themselves in the untenable position of being called upon to make an arrest in a situation that was a matter of routine school discipline.

In addition to the school's refusal to have police in the building, there was also considerable confusion as to which precinct, the 102nd in Queens or the 75th in Brooklyn, was responsible for the school's security. With the school located squarely on the county border, half the building on either side, it had been traditional for both precincts to try to evade the major share of responsibility. Lane was both a Brooklyn and a Queens school, with neither community anxious to protect it.

Conditions in the school deteriorated steadily all through December. Selub saw fit to declare a school emergency and assign teachers to patrol duties whenever a rumor of a student uprising came to him. Teachers grew increasingly resentful and demoralized as the school survived on a day-to-day basis with everybody wondering when the final explosion would come. They waited, and talked, and worried. Selub vacillated and tried lulling his staff into a false sense of security. He also made repeated pleas to the student body, urging them to reject violence and to respect the rights of fellow students to live and learn. But the militants among the blacks had been indoctrinated too well by their adult heroes in Ocean Hill, and Selub's speeches didn't give the junkies the cash for the next fix. And the alienated youngsters who couldn't read or spell their own names had tuned out a long time before.

Soon Leslie Campbell, by this time one of the most controversial figures in town as a result of directing a student charge against a police barricade in front of JHS 271 in Ocean Hill, saw fit to make his own presence felt at Lane. Himself a 1958 Lane graduate, Campbell had more than a sentimental interest in his alma mater. He called for an appointment to see Selub, and the principal consented. Unexpectedly, on December 11 Campbell appeared at the school. Assistant Principal Peter Todaro, acting under the instructions of Selub who was absent, escorted Campbell and his two aides on a tour of the building. Campbell, at this time, was officially under suspense by the school board (assigned to Rhody McCoy's office, with pay) for allegedly harassing UFT teachers. He was later absolved of any wrongdoing and reinstated.

His visit to Lane was well planned. To the teachers of Lane and to the most fair-minded New Yorkers, Leslie Campbell represented the most extreme fringe of the black movement. A six foot, seven inch hulk of a man, he was immediately recognized by members of the faculty as he proceeded on his red carpet tour of the school. From time to time one of the trio would stop to open a classroom door and snap a picture of the teacher. A wave of fear went rippling through the school, and as if by some prearranged signal large numbers of black students began congregating in the first floor lobby. The school soon hummed with activity, pushing, shoving . . . students ignoring the instructions of teachers who were trying to clear the halls. Then, as if it had all been planned in advance, the blacks headed for the exits. There was a mass exodus of students and in a matter of minutes most classrooms had only a fraction of the register actually present. There was no doubting the demonic influence wielded by Leslie Campbell over Lane's black students.

Episodes like the Campbell incursion helped to contribute to the racial polarization that was rapidly dividing the school. The whites were becoming increasingly frightened as the violence became more and more racially motivated. Legitimizing the black rage instead of constructively channeling it was the Afro Culture Organization, the on-campus pseudonym for the Brooklyn based Afro-American Students Association which was prohibited from organizing in the schools. The new black school "club" came under the direction of two black teachers who had taken militant anti-union stances and who readily identified with the credo of the ATA. It was impossible to know exactly what went on behind the closed doors of the student meetings. On one occasion Leslie Campbell was the guest speaker. Once they distributed leaflets in the school calling for "the black brothers and sisters" to come to their meeting to demonstrate their black unity. White students did a slow boil as they tasted the bitterness of discrimination based on race. On yet another occasion, William Schmidt, a school aide who from time to time had been the only white person to attend the club's meetings, was told by one of the faculty advisers that he was no longer welcome. No reason was given for his exclusion.

Tension, fear, and distrust continued to build during the month of December, with seemingly nobody able or willing to put the school back together. Conditions reached a fever pitch during the last week of school prior to the abbreviated Christmas recess. (The extended vacation was cut short to provide make-up instruction time.) On December 18 an attractive young teacher was molested by a black youth after she had dismissed her class. In her official report of the incident, she wrote:

> A matter of two minutes passed between the leaving of my students and the point where I walked into the store-room. He followed me and grabbed me from behind around the throat. I felt that I could not breathe. He pulled me to the floor, he on top of me, pulling tighter and tighter against my throat . . .
>
> At this point, I had no breath and the pain in my throat was unbearable. I started to black-out. . . . I then became hysterical, throwing anything I could put my hands on, kicking, fighting, and yelling, "Please don't kill me." During the fight the boy had ripped off my chain belt, torn my stockings to shreds. Blood was pouring out of my mouth and all over my clothes. The extent of the rape, I could not tell, as I was only semi-conscious the entire time. The only thought I had was that of losing my life.[3]

The teacher never returned to Lane. Her career in the New York City public school system was over, she decided.

The situation in the school had by mid-December become intolerable. The deterioration was complete. Nobody was safe as gangs of black youths, many wearing the berets and insignia of the Panthers, roamed the halls, ringing fire alarms, breaking windows, setting fires, and assaulting any white youth who dared go into a lavatory or any other part of the building that was not under the supervision of an adult. Now on a daily basis Lane's UFT representatives appealed to Selub, and in a letter of December 23 the principal was asked: "How many more of Lane's teachers and students must be sacrificed . . . vilified, assaulted, molested . . . before the administration recognizes that its policy of *keeping the police out and bringing the Leslie Campbells in* is contributing to the prevailing anarchy in our school?"[4]

As usual there was no response from the principal who had, by this time, lost any semblance of control of his school. Among the numerous incidents that shocked the staff during those December weeks was the ugly unprovoked attack by five black girls against a young white girl. The hideous assault occurred in the auditorium, which was being used as a study hall due to the shortage of classroom space. Brutally attacking their victim, laughing and chanting, they stripped her of her clothing from the waist up. Viciously and sadistically they punched her in the face, and left her lying there helpless, half-naked and hysterical. Her only crime, the color of her skin!

Inaction and permissiveness at the top resulted in abject resignation and apathy on the part of many teachers who had come to view the situation as hopeless. It was becoming all too clear that Selub wouldn't move, and it was only at this point that I, as the school's UFT chairman, came to the conclusion that as teachers we had some moral duty to initiate a void-filling program in behalf of our students and ourselves.

A stunned administration had proven itself unwilling and/or unable to act. The teachers would have to fill the vacuum. Earlier, the chapter's executive committee had drafted a resolution formulating a broad action program to focus public attention on the school's severe problems and to mobilize local community support for a drive to seek solutions. In a December 19 memorandum to the Chapter Council (executive committee), I wrote: "The Council, as a duly elected and representative body must act now. A SAFE EDUCATIONAL ATMOSPHERE MUST BE RESTORED TO LANE, AND WE MUST BE PREPARED TO TAKE THOSE STEPS NECESSARY TO BRING THIS ABOUT."[5]

If there is anything a public school administrator dreads, it is publicity that shows his school in a bad light. To administrators of the public schools newspapers are anathema, and it is customary for them to try to keep their dirty laundry within the school. The educational bureaucracy was such that the road to advancement up the administrative ladder did not depend on achievement of any kind but on how good a soldier an administrator could be. Rule number one was to avoid any situation that might cause embarrassment to an immediate superior. This rule was especially important to an administrator who was serving his three-year probationary period and whose primary goal was to secure tenure in that particular rank. This was the bag Morton Selub found himself in during his second year of probation as a high school principal, when the UFT chapter decided to let the gruesome story out to the public.

On December 20 the union chapter, faced with a faltering administration, moved to fill the void. Unanimously, its twenty-seven-member executive committee voted to "undertake a public relations and publicity campaign to focus attention on the problems of Franklin K. Lane High School . . ."[6] But they went even further. The time for requests and appeals had passed. Now they would call on the faculty to refuse to work under such conditions and they added a motion giving Selub just one last chance to act, stating:

> That the Chapter Council directs its consultation committee to meet with the administration to advise it of the necessity of bringing police in the building in sufficient numbers to assure student safety and the protection of teachers on building patrols, and, that the committee suggest to the administration a series of other steps that should be implemented to tighten security, and, that in the event necessary police protection is not forthcoming to assure student and teacher safety the Council reconvene immediately to advise parents of the hazardous conditions within the building and to recommend to the chapter a vote for a *job action* that would entail teachers clocking in and reporting directly to the school auditorium for all-day faculty and departmental meetings.[7]

Now the gauntlet was down. The union chapter was for the first time openly pitting itself against the principal, expressing its determination to take the ultimate step unless he acted. The next move by the union was to apprise the press of the teachers' position, and on December 26 a local newspaper carried the first story of the reign of terror that was sweeping the school. The headline read, "LANE TEACHERS ASK POLICE IN SCHOOL."[8] Meanwhile, the chapter leadership was quick to put the council recommendations to a faculty referendum and on December 26 and 27, in secret ballot, the teachers approved by a 148–14 count "to undertake the publicity campaign . . . ," and with a 155–8 vote approved the resolution calling for the chapter to help organize and actively participate with parents to achieve:

1. The creation of a safe educational environment for both students and faculty.
2. The reduction of the size of the student body.

3. The assurance of a truly integrated student body by correcting the racial imbalance.[9]

The third item was to become the most controversial, and was the basis for the soon to be made charge that we were demanding the removal of all black youngsters from the school.

On January 6, 1969, Selub missed his one last chance to win the confidence of his staff. He had called a conference of the faculty to discuss some school matter that was unrelated to the present crisis. A small number of teachers, those on the late session schedule, had come in early to attend the morning conference. But the large bulk of the staff, more than 200 teachers, came to the afternoon session hoping to hear their principal tell them what he was prepared to do to regain control of the building. He didn't. After sitting patiently for fifteen minutes I rose to request that the remainder of the meeting be devoted to a full and frank discussion of current school conditions. Selub refused, reminding me that only that morning he had discussed the entire matter with the chapter committee and that this was neither the time nor the place for a discussion.

"Mr. Selub," I appealed, "There is only one issue that has *any* relevance right now, and that has to do with all these people who are being attacked in this school."

"I repeat, Mr. Saltzman, this is not the time or the place, and I'm asking you to sit down," came the principal's reply.

Two hundred teachers watched. Who would back down?

"Mr. Selub," I began again, "as the elected representative of this faculty I have a commitment to every teacher in this room. I will not sit down and be part of a 'business as usual' meeting while students and teachers are being assaulted here every day."

Selub's face reddened. He couldn't tolerate this sort of challenge in front of his whole staff.

"Mr. Saltzman, I am asking you for the last time, please sit down. I refuse to allow you to use my meeting as a public forum," was his final retort.

It was a confrontation neither of us wanted, or expected. Privately, our relationship had been a good one, and even when we disagreed we were honest without overreacting on a personal basis. But now I was putting him on a spot in front of his faculty and our relationship would suffer because of it. There was only one thing to do to end the deadlock. I picked up my briefcase and overcoat and walked out of the meeting. Moments later, in the first-floor general office, I learned that just as Selub's meeting was getting started three black youths had attacked another member of the staff. Neil Benisvy, a business mathematics teacher, had attended the morning conference and was leaving school when the assault occurred. Benisvy was unknown to his assailants, and they to him. For no apparent reason the youths jumped him from the rear, knocked him down, and pummeled him in the face mercilessly until his skin was raw and he was drowning in blood. Rushed to a hospital, he was treated for multiple bone breaks in his nose. Although Benisvy's description of his assailants differed from the one given by Frank Siracusa two weeks later, in these assaults as well as in the preceding and subsequent ones, robbery was not the motive. Benisvy reported that the youths made no attempt to get at his wallet.

At almost the very moment Morton Selub was telling his staff that he would not discuss with them the matter of their personal safety in and around the school, Neil Benisvy became another of many casualties. The next day the UFT chapter sent a telegram to the district attorneys of Queens and Kings (Brooklyn) counties, advising: "Lane faculty requests judicial investigation into current school situation which aids and abets rash of crimes by students . . . Principal refuses to permit patrolmen to be stationed within building to combat crime on school premises."[10]

That evening the union chapter made its boldest move. It was Open School Night, and the teachers had prepared a leaflet under the UFT letterhead. "Dear Parent," the letter began:

> We know that your main reason for coming tonight is to find out how your child is progressing in his (her) classes. But we think that there is another matter that you should know about which may be even more important than homework and test marks, and that has to do with the very safety of your child in the school building.

The letter went on to tell the gruesome story of the fear and terror to which their children were being subjected, and laid the blame squarely on Selub's doorstep. It continued:

> Nobody likes to admit that the problems of safety have gotten out of hand, but the simple fact is that teachers alone cannot provide the kind of safety your child must have. . . . As parents you have every right to expect that the school authorities will take all necessary steps to protect your child's person and property, and as teachers we could not in good conscience let you come here tonight without giving you a frank and honest picture of the school situation.[11]

The chapter had taken great care to keep the existence of the letter top-secret until the parents began arriving at 7:30 P.M. Had the administration learned of the message beforehand, it would have specifically barred teachers from distributing it. Few would have defied the principal since an act of insubordination is grounds for revocation of a teacher's certification. But by the time the letter came to Selub's attention at about 8:00 P.M., every teacher in the school had received a supply and was distributing them freely to visiting parents.

I was directing the operation from the social studies office on the second floor, and as I expected, it wasn't long before Selub found me to demand that the letters be recalled from the teachers. That was impossible, I explained, and even if I could, I wouldn't do it.

"The parents have a right to know the truth about what's going on here," I insisted.

Selub, still steaming from our confrontation at the faculty meeting the day before, viewed the UFT letter to parents as a most serious challenge to his authority as school head. He called over to Peter Todaro, his assistant principal:

"Mr. Todaro, I want you to listen to this as a witness," he said. "I am ordering Mr. Saltzman to call back these letters and if he refuses I will consider that to be an act of insubordination. Now, Mr. Saltzman, are you going to recall those letters?"

Paul McSloy, acting social studies chairman, grimaced when I again indicated that it couldn't be done. Selub and Todaro left, and for the next hour toured the building ordering teachers to stop distributing the unauthorized literature. Most obeyed, but the two administrators were unable to get to everybody and in one way or another we made sure that every visiting parent received a copy of the letter. There was no turning back from here.

For a brief moment the next day there was speculation among teachers as to whether or not Selub would follow through on his threat to file charges against me. But that afternoon, there was yet another explosion, this time in the student cafeteria. Michael Bettinger, a young social studies teacher, told what happened in his official accident report:

> During my prep [preparation] period I was informed by students that there were no teachers in the students' cafeteria. I went down to the cafeteria [located in the basement] and called the dean's office. I noticed students stealing supplies. I went to pick up a box dropped on the floor. At that time my path was blocked by a male Negro student. I stood there for two seconds, did nothing, said nothing. At that time the student punched me in the jaw without provocation. As I started to chase him I was kicked, shoved, and punched. Trays, garbage, and cake were thrown at me. I was spit upon and attacked by a large number of students, at least 30. I gave chase to the student who originally punched me. After ten minutes I lost him[12]

Michael Bettinger, weeping and holding an ice pack to his swollen eye, made a direct report of the incident to an emergency meeting of the Chapter Council that afternoon. Then Tony LaMarca, a health education teacher who was in charge of supervision in the cafeteria, told about having witnessed the attack on Bettinger. LaMarca was a stalwart on the faculty, well liked by the students. But on this day, visibly shaken and on the verge of tears, he blurted out the rest of the story of how he tried to apprehend Bettinger's assailant. In his written report to the principal, he said: "As I was escorting him [the assailant] to the dean's office, the following events occurred: 1. His friends came running from the cafeteria and surrounded me. . . . 2. As they surrounded me they began taunting and shouting at me, 'white mother fucker, what are you going to do now?' "[13]

LaMarca told of just barely being able to escape from the hostile mob, and tears rolled down his face as he told his colleagues, "And these were kids I've know for a long time, kids I have in the gym and with whom I thought I had a close rapport. But out there, it was like I was a perfect stranger to them. All that seemed to matter was that they were black and I was white."

Selub knew that for the council this was the last straw; that it would vote to recommend a job action, and that the faculty would sustain that recommendation. He realized, too, that the only chance to head off such a move was to come directly to the council and make a personal appeal using his own persuasive powers. Selub was gambling, putting his own prestige on the line. He waited in his office as the debate within the council proceeded on the question of whether or not to grant the principal permission to address the body. Feelings against the principal were running high, and there was a good deal of opposition to the proposal. But shortly after 4:00 P.M. Selub was notified that his request had been approved. For twenty minutes he appealed to the council, cautioning against "hasty" action, which, he thought, would make matters worse. In the exchange that followed various council members lashed out at him, accusing him of malfeasance and neglect of duty. Morton Selub felt the full force of the antagonisms that had been building against him for his wavering approach to the catastrophe which had beset the school. He returned to his office knowing that he had failed to sway the council and that it would vote instead for a job action. In the meantime the press had been advised of the possibility of a vote for a work stoppage. Several newspaper articles had already been written about the school's troubles, and word of a teacher walkout whetted the appetites of story-hungry reporters. They waited downstairs with Selub as the strategy and tactics of the chapter action were planned.

The presence of the UFT high school vice president, George Altomare, himself a member of Lane's faculty, was a welcome assistance. Several members were advocating an immediate walkout, but Altomare, well schooled in the art of bargaining, explained that the only thing better than a strike was the threat of one.

"It's easy to wave a red flag and be a hero when everybody is reacting emotionally," he chided, "but that's not responsible leadership."

In the end the body voted for a more moderate program, establishing a timetable, setting forth specific demands, and giving Selub and the school board a chance to improve conditions. The resolution read:

> That a referendum be presented to the full chapter on Thursday, January 9, 1969 with the Council recommendations, and that all referendum ballots be counted by the Council elections committee at 3:00 P.M., and in accordance with the results,
>
> 1. at 7:40 A.M. on Friday, January 10, 1969 we apprise the principal that the faculty will consider Monday, January 13, 1969 to be a non-teaching day, and
> 2. that all teachers clock in at 8:40 A.M. on Monday, January 13 and report directly to room 230 for a faculty conference during which time arrangements shall be made for professional improvements . . .
> 3. that we continue this same program each day until such time as the proper protective measures are taken so that we are able to assure student and teacher safety.[14]

At 6:00 P.M. on January 8 Selub was given the news. He had two days notice before his staff would walk off the job.

If there was doubt in anybody's mind about the determination of the faculty to go through with its job action, the 179–30 vote in favor of the proposal was a signal that there would be no instruction at Lane unless the administration acted, and acted quickly. It didn't take long for District 19 Superintendent Elizabeth O'Daly to step in and take the play away from Selub. On the evening of January 9 she summoned Altomare and me to a special meeting in her East New York office. As the UFT's District 19 representative I had dealt with O'Daly frequently. While relations between us were usually strained because of what she considered my over-aggressiveness, she knew that this wasn't a union bluff. O'Daly understood that unless police were assigned to the school she would be confronted with a wildcat strike that was likely to spread to other high schools in the district and have immense citywide implications. Joining O'Daly at the evening conference were Selub, the mayor's representative J. David Love, and top-ranking officers of the 75th police precinct and the 12th Division of Brooklyn. The television cameras were already set up when we arrived at her office, and before entering the meeting Altomare and I announced to the newsmen the results of the job-action vote taken by the teachers that afternoon. Now all of New York would know about the Lane debacle.

The meeting with O'Daly went well, for the decision to send police into Lane had been prearranged between Nathan Brown, the school board's executive deputy superintendent, and City Hall. Now O'Daly and the local police officials were just going through the motions to give the public the impression that this was merely a grass-roots matter that was being worked out cooperatively between the school, union, and police at the local level. The last thing the school board wanted to do was give the idea that it was adopting a policy of calling for police protection in troubled schools.

Lane's teachers were not alone in their battle. There was general support from the public, which had been reading about the assaults for several weeks. The issue was clearly understood by everybody and one with which most people could easily identify. Even the most anti-union person did not begrudge a teacher the right to work under safe conditions, and every parent who had a child in a public school knew what it meant to worry about a youngster's safety during school hours. And that fear was strongest among parents, black and white, whose children attended schools like Franklin K. Lane. The Lane Parents Association had been kept well informed by the chapter, and the teachers could expect their full support in the event a job action was necessary. On January 9 the association president, Mrs. Edna Richards of Woodhaven, wrote to Board of Education president John Doar.

"We are very much concerned with the problems at Lane High School," she wrote, "and hope that there will be changes made so that students need not attend high school in fear." And in recognition of the serious racial upheavals, she cautioned, "We ask that Lane High School be given speedy relief or there will be a mass exodus of white students."[15]

Individual parents of Lane students also complained on their own. One such parent, Mrs. Rose Friedman, had this to say in a letter to Mayor Lindsay:

> My daughter is a statistic!!! . . . She is in the top 1% of her graduating class. . . . In short, she gives a DAMN . . .
>
> But alas, my daughter has now become another kind of statistic. She belongs to the deplorably high percentage of unfortunate students who have been attacked and assaulted on the school grounds.
>
> I am writing this letter to plead and indeed, demand, that proper steps be reviewed and taken to insure the safety of the children on the school premises. This letter may label me a frantic mother, but please do not let me become a bereaved one.[16]

With letters like these coming to City Hall, it was not surprising that the mayor's newly created School Task Force steered the way for the assignment of police inside Lane High School. It was a precedent that would soon be repeated in other schools in all parts of the city. The pledge to assign the police beginning January 13 resulted in the calling off of the job action on January 10, shortly after Altomare and I, accompanied by council members Mark Smith and Seymour Cohen, signed a written statement in O'Daly's office. The school board was following a policy of granting more and more powers to local superintendents and community boards. Even though the central board had always insisted on a contractual provision with the union prohibiting negotiations or agreements at the local level, here was a time they actually encouraged it. For them it was a good precedent, giving de facto authority to local superintendents. The agreement with O'Daly stated:

> For the duration of the emergency problem in pupil behavior at Franklin K. Lane High School, seven policemen are assigned for the full school day [8:00–4:00 P.M.] on continuous duty inside the school building. School staff and administrators will consult together on the time and place of these assignments. As the emergency diminishes and finally disappears the Lane chapter representative and school administrators will agree as to the systematic phasing out of these emergency measures. Until such time the police will remain on duty.[17]

The bringing in of the police was a bitter defeat for Morton Selub, and one he continued to resent. A year later, after the school had passed through a spring and yet another autumn of racial strife, and with a full contingent of police still on duty inside the building, he was able to sit back and reflect upon events, telling one newspaper reporter: "I fought tooth and nail to keep them [the police] out last year. The police were brought in over my head. If I remove the police now I'd have the black community on my side, but the white community would be on my back."[18]

On Saturday, January 11, Selub met with a committee of chapter representatives to work out the details of Monday's opening and the utilization of the seven policemen who would be on duty in the school. Fifteen specific methods of tightening security were agreed upon and set down in writing as part of the minutes of that consultation. But more important was the discussion of the chapter's long-range proposals, which went well beyond the immediate concern of student safety. Selub agreed to join the faculty in requesting the school board's zoning unit to reduce the school population to enable it to go on to a single session in February. He agreed, too, that the school needed a correction of its racial composition to assure the future of integration. Finally, he promised to look into the possibility of reassigning the present ninth and tenth grades, which were most heavily nonwhite. There was full accord between the principal and the teacher leaders that too high a percentage of ghetto children were being zoned into the already overcrowded school, and that what was needed was an immediate reduction of the number of students and a correction of the racial imbalance.

The next day, a Sunday, saw the chapter committee come to school, voluntarily, and work all through the day and well into the night preparing a schedule of emergency building patrols for teachers. By assigning every member of the staff to some security post there could be no criticism that teachers wanted policemen to do their job of enforcing ordinary school discipline.

All had gone well, but on the day the police were finally assigned, January 13, I made the first costly blunder of the campaign. Encouraged by Selub's consent to join with the chapter to demand a reduction of the student body and a correction of the racial imbalance, I jumped the gun. Feeling that the Lane story was still hot news, and anxious to capitalize on the events of the previous week, I hastily released the story to the press. It turned out to be a most serious error in judgment, for the *New York Times* ran the story under the headline, "UNION ASKS SCHOOL TO SHIFT NEGROES," and it began: "A spokesman for union teachers at Franklin K. Lane High School in Brooklyn called yesterday for the transfer of 1,100 Negro students out of the school following student disorders and alleged assaults on teachers in the last two weeks."

The article went on to talk about the gerrymander of the school's zone to take in more and more black students from Bedford Stuyvesant and Ocean Hill-Brownsville, and concluded: "Mr. Saltzman attributed recent student disorders, including a rash of extortions, vandalism, larceny, and numerous acts against other students to a group of several hundred black students that has grown from a small hard core group ."[19]

My relationship with Albert Shanker, UFT president, had always been a good one and there was no reason to believe that he would undercut my efforts at Lane with an expedient maneuver of his own. Without contacting me first, Shanker fired off a telegram to me and sent copies of it out over the wires. The *Times* story the next day was headed, "LANE SCHOOL PLEA DISOWNED BY UFT," and noted:

> The teachers' union disassociated itself yesterday from a demand of its chapter chairman at the Franklin K. Lane High School for the transfer of 1,100 Negro students. . . . Mr. Shanker's telegram to Mr. Saltzman said that "while the call to transfer the Negro students was undoubtedly based upon a desire to achieve racial balance in the school, it will undoubtedly be misconstrued . . . I urge you to withdraw this proposal and to leave the specific methods of attaining balance to be worked out at the conference table."[20]

It was the first time the union president had injected himself directly into the Lane affair and in so doing he gave the impression that the chapter did not have the full support of the central body. But if, indeed, the president was less than enthusiastic about the Lane chapter's campaign, other high school chapters made up for it by sending telegrams and letters to Lane to buoy up teachers' morale. Some schools were faring even worse than Lane, and in a sense the Lane chapter's action was a fight in behalf of all those high schools that were being disrupted. Teachers all over the city were watching to see how the Lane affair would be handled.

In the meantime Elizabeth O'Daly was writing to Executive Deputy Superintendent Nathan Brown, thanking him for having used his offices to facilitate the assignment of the police to Lane.

"Please accept my warmest thanks," she wrote, "for the prompt and decisive action you took in helping me to prevent a work stoppage at F. K. Lane High School . . . We are following up with faculty and community action to try to improve conditions."[21]

On January 18, two days before the burning, John Lindsay saw the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. He had been under tremendous pressure to take action against black militant teacher Leslie Campbell for his reading of an anti-Semitic poem during an interview on a local radio station. The poem, which Campbell claimed was written by one of his fifteen-year-old students in the Ocean Hill district, began:

> Hey Jew boy, with that yarmulka [skull cap] on your head,
> You pale-faced Jew boy, I wish you were dead.

The large and influential Jewish community in the city was outraged, and one group after another rose up to demand Campbell's ouster. This was a clear case of anti-Semitism in the public schools, they argued, and it couldn't be tolerated. The mayor, up to this point, had ducked the Campbell issue, explaining that it was a matter for the school board to handle. The board, of course, with its black vice president, Milton Galamison—among others—firmly in Campbell's corner, wasn't about to take action against the fiery Ocean Hill teacher. But as the pressure on Lindsay mounted, the mayor grabbed at the chance of a politically expedient out. On January 18 he sent a letter to the board president, John Doar, who was also wary of taking any action against Campbell for fear of incurring the wrath of the black community. Even moderate blacks who did not hold to Campbell's extreme views could be expected to rally to his defense if any attempt was made to discipline him for his reading of the anti-Semitic poem. For Campbell himself, the prospect of being formally charged was not new, and many thought he was aiming for just such a confrontation with the school board. In 1967 a panel of superintendents heard charges against Campbell and ruled that he had been insubordinate for taking his class, against orders, to a Malcolm X commemorative ceremony in Harlem. As "punishment," they removed him from his post as a substitute teacher at JHS 35 in Bedford-Stuyvesant and reassigned him to JHS 271 in the newly created Ocean Hill-Brownsville experimental district.

But now, on January 18, Lindsay saw a chance to quiet the anger of the Jewish community against Campbell while appeasing the blacks. In his letter to Doar, which he released to the press, the mayor cited both Campbell and me in asking for a school board inquiry into racism in the schools. Referring to Campbell, the mayor said: "I am particularly disturbed by the public statements of the teacher involved, which strongly suggest that not only was the poem's content consistent with the teacher's views but also that the children in his classes were being encouraged to express themselves in this manner."[22]

The mayor then cited my own alleged demand that 1,100 black students be transfered out of Lane: "The request, though not explicitly defamatory in its wording, was, none the less regrettable. . . . While I am aware of the complexity of the Lane High School situation, I am sure you will agree that placing the entire blame on the shoulders of the school's black students and advocating their removal only inflames an already tense situation."[23]

Most observers felt that Campbell and I were going to hang together, an irony that threw together a teacher who had been a violent advocate of separatism and one who had stood up for integration. But the exigencies of the moment called for a politically viable solution and the mayor chose the path which to him seemed to offer the least resistance. On January 19, the day Lindsay's letter to Doar hit the press, and just twenty-four hours before the Siracusa burning, I responded to the mayor's charge with a public telegram of my own. I called attention to the fact that both Selub and the Parents Association president had concurred with me in separate letters or public interviews that there must be relief of the severe overcrowding in Lane, and that the racial imbalance had to be corrected if the city was serious about its commitment to an integrated society. In concluding, I said: "No smear tactic by the Mayor's office will convince the public that the Lane High School UFT chapter, the principal, and the Parents Association president are of the same mold as Leslie Campbell."[24]

One can only speculate about what might have happened had the burning not taken place the very next day. This was the third time in as many weeks that I found myself out on a limb only to have some unexpected tragedy occur to divert attention from me. There had been the heated exchange with Selub at the faculty meeting, which took place at the same time Neil Benisvy was being mauled. Then there had been the insubordination threat on Open School Night, which was followed the very next day by the assault on Michael Bettinger and the subsequent faculty vote for a job action. But it appeared now that the school board, at the very least, would transfer me to another school . . . using the threat of formal charges as the alternative to my consenting to leave quietly for an assignment elsewhere. Some of the best schools in the city were full of teachers who accepted this "punishment" rather than fight the board.

But any chance of the school board attempting such a political move was laid to rest with the first radio reports of the burning on the morning of January 20. It was a new ball game, and if Albert Shanker had any thoughts of not supporting the Lane chapter he quickly reversed his field. Learning of the morning's events, he immediately wired the mayor:

> We are shocked by your attempts to equate the efforts of Harold Saltzman . . . with the anti-semitic and racist activities of Leslie Campbell . . .
>
> The horrifying incident which occurred at the school today is an example of the kind of problem aggravated by such overcrowding. It

> is only one of a dozen incidents which have occurred at the school during the past three weeks. . . .
>
> However, Mr. Campbell's activities include precipitating a riot in Ocean Hill-Brownsville in which a pitched battle with police ensued, and making anti-semitic remarks on television and radio. Your effort to tie two very distinctly different situations together was most unfortunate and should be condemned.[25]

With this final blast Shanker made sure to tie in the demonstration district he had been at war with for nine months. Soon the mayor was jumping on the Lane bandwagon, coming to the school's defense and forgetting about his request for an inquiry. First, a City Hall spokesman said Lindsay had asked Police Commissioner Howard B. Leary for a personal report on "this incredibly outrageous incident." The following day saw the mayor pay a personal visit to Siracusa at La Guardia Hospital, saying, "It was a horrendous incident which cannot be tolerated."[26] Even Mario Procaccino, running hard for the Democratic party nod to oppose Lindsay in the November mayoralty election, came to the hospital, only to miss the TV cameras which had left after getting His Honor filmed at bedside, in time for the Six O'Clock News.

School Superintendent Bernard Donovan made his first visit to the school on January 20 to confer with Selub. Afterward, he told waiting reporters, who by now were swarming all over the building, "The school is terrribly overcrowded. When the register should be 4,000 and you have 5,600 kids that creates problems."[27] Nobody bothered to tell the district superintendent that her own superior, Donovan, had come to the school, and feeling her own authority undermined, O'Daly rushed over after the superintendent left and let everyone know just who was in charge of District 19 schools. She made no attempt to conceal her anger at Selub for not apprising her of Donovan's visit. (O'Daly was still seething over Donovan's sabotaging her efforts as superintendent of the MES program in 1967.)

Meanwhile, Albert Shanker was holding another press conference at the union office, using the occasion to strike out at the board's decentralization plan. He talked about Selub's refusal to call in police even after repeated acts of violence, and attributed this to the principal's fear of angering black militants who could force him out of his job if the board's decentralization proposal were adopted by the state legislature. Brilliantly, he bound the Lane debacle to JHS 271, the hotbed of extremism in Ocean Hill,

"We may ask that Franklin K. Lane be closed," Shanker said, "if the violence appears to be organized from within as it was at JHS 271." But not wanting to leave the impression that he would take a hard line, he quickly added, "No one wants a strike. Everybody has had enough strikes for a while."[28] Another alternative could be found for resolving the conflagration at Lane, he suggested.

While Lindsay, Shanker, Donovan, Selub, and O'Daly were all doing their own thing on the day of the burning, and with the school deluged with agents of the mass media, attention again focused on the UFT chapter. What would the local group do now, everybody wondered? An emergency meeting of the council had been called for 3:00 P.M. Panic had set in among the faculty as word of the burning spread. A number of teachers simply left the building and went home, fearful of a student conspiracy. Many others, who had always shunned the use of high-powered tactics in dealing with the administration, were now clamoring for an immediate walkout. It was fortunate that some six hours had elapsed from the time of the burning to the convening of the council, giving irate members a chance to talk out their aggressions and allowing emotions to subside.

After a more agitated group of council members had lost out in their bid to trigger an instantaneous wildcat strike, cooler heads prevailed. Yes, we could and we would walk out this time, I promised, but first we had to put ourselves into a negotiating position. There was no point to walking out unless we were absolutely sure what it was we wanted to accomplish. What is it we want? And what concessions should we demand from the board in return for our staying at our posts? And what should our strategy be this time? These were the questions to which the council addressed itself as the media waited for word from the meeting. Shortly after 5:00 P.M. a decision was reached. Once again the council would present its demands to

Selub and give him until 2:30 P.M. the next day to reply. If the response was not satisfactory the council would convene a special meeting of the entire faculty and advise it of the principal's position. If the demands were not met the council would then ask for a vote on a job action to begin the following day (January 22).

The six demands formulated by the council were presented to Selub late Monday afternoon. They included reduction in the size of the student body to facilitate a return to a single session, rezoning of the school to correct the racial imbalance, closer scrutiny of the records of incoming junior high school students, a freeze on the admission of new students during the coming spring semester, a blanket rule barring the return to Lane of any student suspended or arrested for threatened or physical assault against a student or teacher, and the creation of a special educational program for emotionally disturbed youngsters whose presence in the building constituted a danger to themselves and other students.

The six demands, which were reduced to writing and set forth in rather specific language, were given to the staff in form of council minutes the very next day. The resolution calling for the job action in the event the demands were not met, stated: "That we ask the principal to close the school effective January 21 to enable the faculty to reorganize the school and reprogram the student body in accordance with the above proposals . . ."[29]

In his press conference Albert Shanker had indicated that he expected to meet with Donovan the next day in an attempt to resolve the Lane crisis. Vito DeLeonardis, UFT staff director, had been the middle man between the Lane chapter and Shanker's office since the trouble began. I spoke to him shortly after the council decision had been reached and told him our plan of action. He advised me of the meeting scheduled at board headquarters the next day. George Altomare would join Shanker at that meeting with Donovan, and I was to maintain close telephone communication with him to keep abreast of the proceedings there. It was possible, according to DeLeonardis, that the settlement we were looking for would have to be worked out locally at the school if Donovan refused to commit himself.

The minutes of the council meeting, complete with the demands and job-action resolution, were already in the teachers' letterboxes when they arrived Tuesday morning. Student attendance was especially light due to the general fear stimulated by the burning. Shanker phoned me at about 10.00 A.M., before leaving for his meeting with Donovan.

"What do you have to get to keep things going out there?" he wanted to know.

"A temporary closing down, at least for the rest of the week, and a reduction in the student body to get back on a single session next term," was my reply.

"I'll do my best," Shanker promised, "but I don't know if Donovan will buy it. You may have to get it out of Selub and O'Daly first. The mayor is coming in on it, too, and that should help." I knew I was on my own.

Everyone knew that something had to give by 2:30 P.M. on January 21. Shortly before noon a luncheon conference was convened in Selub's office, bringing together the principal and his assistant, Peter Todaro, O'Daly and her executive assistant, Frances O'Connor, and the District 19 community relations coordinator, Edward Kissane. But the most important participant of all was the man who would crack the stand-off three hours later, the mayor's own personal representative, J. David Love. They would be calling for me shortly, I was told.

That call came at about 1:00 P.M. and I asked the other committee members to hold themselves in abeyance in the event I needed their assistance. For the time being, at least, I preferred to carry the ball alone. This was a one-shot deal, and a wrong word, even a facial expression, could upset the whole apple cart. It was a situation that required strong discipline and a single-minded purpose. Inside the principal's office the atmosphere was tense. While Selub tried to conceal his own uneasiness, O'Daly's trepidation was very much in evidence. Love sat back, watched, and listened.

The district superintendent didn't waste any time getting right down to the business at hand, addressing herself to the chapter's demands. I had begun by removing my wristwatch, placing it on the table before me, and pointing out that I had exactly ninety minutes before I was due at a faculty conference to report the results of the meeting and conduct a vote on the chapter resolution they had before them. O'Daly rather quickly consented to the demand that student assailants not be returned to Lane. Within half an hour agreement was reached on several of the others, with certain contingencies and modifications which did not weaken the effect from the teachers' viewpoint. In the meantime, Altomare had called from the board to tell me that the meeting with Donovan was over and that he had consented to neither of the major demands. Shanker was right. I would have to go for broke myself. The same information about the unproductive meeting at the board was transmitted to the other participants through other channels.

By 2:00 P.M. O'Daly and Selub had even agreed to close the school for the remainder of the week, but as a matter of protocol we had to leave the announcement to Donovan and not specify publicly the exact number of days the school would stay closed. But the big hang-up came over the question of the single session for the new semester scheduled to begin in less than two weeks. Yes, they would allow a single session, but it would have to be with a register which even after mid-year graduation would be about 5,000. I insisted on a maximum student body of 4,350, the figure Todaro had suggested as the most we could accommodate on a single session. The debate heated up. I refused to accept a single session with the school bulging at its seams and class size skyrocketing over the contractual limit of thirty-four. O'Daly, on the other hand, refused to make any commitment about reducing the register by 650 students and wouldn't act unless she received some signal from higher authorities. It was past 2:00 P.M. and O'Daly was becoming irritable. The pressure was wearing her down and she lashed out at me for what she considered my intransigence and irresponsibility for refusing to step back on the single session. We were deadlocked, and I reminded them that there were only a few minutes left.

The mayor's man had remained silent throughout the session, but at 2:30 P.M., when I got up to leave, J. David Love assumed the role for which he was sent. His function was to avert a teacher walkout that could trigger wildcat strikes all over the city and plunge the town into a new round of racial conflict even more terrible than that elicited by the Great School Strike. The mayor's own hopes of reelection in the fall were riding on the prospect of restoring peace and harmony to the city and he wasn't about to let a crisis in one school destroy his political future. Love had to be able to deliver. What else was he doing there, I thought?

Now it was Love's turn to go into action. He asked the parties to wait a while longer and went to the phone on Selub's desk. In hushed tones he reported on the areas of agreement and explained the hang-up. How far would the mayor go? Love returned to the table and asked us to hold on a while longer. He was expecting a return call in a matter of minutes. We waited. An explanation of the delay was sent up to the conference room where the staff had assembled. In the interim I gave the council committee an up-to-the-minute briefing as to where we stood and asked their indulgence to allow me wrap it up. They agreed.

It was nearly 3:00 P.M. when Love's call came through and we reconvened to hear the good news. Somebody had given somebody the word. It was OK to go on to the single session with a 4,350-member student body, but the details of just how the reduction would be achieved had to be left to the school administration. It was settled, and everybody breathed a sigh of relief.

The rest of the chapter committee joined me, and together with Love, Selub, and O'Daly's representative (she left when Love came through with the news), we went over the seven areas of agreement, point by point, beginning with the closing down of school the next day. By 3:30 P.M. the meeting was over with everybody shaking hands and saying how good this would be for the school and how maybe now we could all get back to the business of education again.

The faculty roared its approval when the terms of the agreement were read off. As a bonus we would retain all of our teaching positions and twenty-six instructors who would have normally been excessed as a result of the contraction were allowed to keep their jobs for the remainder of the school year, at least. The settlement delighted the staff and this was their first moment of gaiety since the beginning of the term.

The exact role played by John Lindsay in bringing about the settlement remains a mystery. That there was a round-robin telephone network connecting City Hall, 110 Livingston Street, and union headquarters on Park Avenue South is not in doubt. But there remains the lingering question as to whether Donovan (or perhaps Doar) gave the actual go-ahead, through Lindsay, to drop or transfer 650 students from Lane's rolls, or whether Lindsay's newly created School Task Force (either with or without the mayor's knowledge) took it upon itself to usurp official Board of Education prerogatives.

At least one prominent New Yorker with reliable contacts at both City Hall and board headquarters believed in the usurpation theory. Paul Parker, a crack reporter for WINS radio news, did a series of broadcasts several months later revealing the circumstances surrounding the creation of the mayor's School Task Force. According to Parker's report, secret memoranda were dispatched by Louis Feldstein, the man the mayor had tapped to head up the project. Feldstein's confidential master plan, which was supposed to be restricted to a few upper echelon aides, was designed as an undercover operation to bring about resolution of nasty school problems which the clumsy school bureaucracy couldn't handle. It was conceived on the assumption that a major shortcoming of the school system was the disinclination of top administrators to exert leadership and exercise responsibility. Time and again there were confrontations and breakdowns in communications because administrators at all levels passed the buck, and in the bureaucratic maze that characterized the massive school system there was always somebody to pass the buck to. The mayor had reached the conclusion that since he was usually blamed for such breakdowns by a public that didn't understand how the intricate school system operated, he should be able to send in his own people to try to avoid the kind of catastrophe that might have developed if the Lane faculty had pulled off its planned walkout.

If the mayor and/or his Task Force aides had made a grandstand play, Selub and O'Daly weren't quibbling about technicalities. They weren't at all concerned about where the authority came from. Official word from City Hall was every bit as good as a directive from the superintendent, at this critical juncture. What is still unclear is whether or not Donovan and/or Doar were involved in any way. It should be noted that at no time subsequent to the agreement did either the superintendent or the board president make any public statement about interference from the mayor's office. Even the vice president of the board, Milton Galamison, did not raise the question of City Hall involvement when he came to the defense of the 678 suspended students in whose behalf a civil liberties suit was soon to be filed in federal court.

The next day Lindsay commented on the agreement, calling it "a gratifying step forward," and praising Donovan, Shanker, and Selub for "this effective resolution of the difficulty."[30]

And Albert Shanker had equally complimentary words for the mayor.

"We've criticized Lindsay at times," he said, "but this time he used his good offices to avoid an explosive situation." And the January 22 edition of the union newspaper observed that "President Shanker announced his public acknowledgement of the 'very great help of Mayor Lindsay, who saw the dangers of the situation' in arranging for a breathing spell in the volatile situation."[31]

But for Lane and for Lindsay, it was only the beginning . . .

Notes to Chapter 1

1. *New York Times*, Jan. 21, 1969.
2. *Newsletter*, Afro-American Students Association, November, 1968.
3. School Accident Report (Name withheld at teacher's request), Dec. 19, 1969.
4. Letter to Morton Selub, Lane principal, from Harold Saltzman, Dec. 23, 1968.

5. Letter to the Lane UFT Chapter Council from Harold Saltzman, Dec. 19, 1968.
6. Minutes, Lane UFT Chapter Council, Dec. 20, 1968.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *The Woodhaven Leader-Observer,* Dec. 26, 1968.
9. Lane UFT chapter referendum, Dec. 26–27, 1968.
10. Telegram to Kings and Queens county district attorneys from the Lane UFT chapter, Jan. 7, 1969.
11. Letter to the parents of Lane students from the UFT chapter, Jan. 7, 1969.
12. School Accident Report of Michael Bettinger, Jan. 8, 1969.
13. School Accident Report of Anthony LaMarca, Jan. 8, 1969.
14. Minutes, Lane UFT Chapter Council, Jan. 8, 1969.
15. Letter to Board of Education President John Doar from Mrs. Edna Richards, president of Lane Parents Association, Jan. 9, 1969.
16. Letter to Mayor John Lindsay from Lane parent, Mrs. Rose Friedman, Jan. 1969.
17. Agreement between District 19 Superintendent Elizabeth O'Daly and the UFT, Jan. 10, 1969.
18. *The Village Voice,* "Lane H.S.: The Powder Keg Could Explode Any Day" by Jonathan Black; Dec. 25, 1969.
19. *New York Times,* Jan. 14, 1969.
20. *Ibid.,* Jan. 15, 1969.
21. Letter to Executive Deputy Superintendent Nathan Brown from District 19 Superintendent O'Daly, Jan. 16, 1969.
22. *New York Times,* Jan. 19, 1969.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Telegram to Mayor John Lindsay from Harold Saltzman, Jan. 19, 1969.
25. Telegram to Mayor John Lindsay from Albert Shanker, Jan. 20, 1969.
26. *Long Island Press,* Jan. 22, 1969.
27. *Ibid.,* Jan. 21, 1969.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Minutes, Lane UFT Chapter Council, Jan. 20, 1969.
30. *Long Island Press,* Jan. 22, 1969.
31. *United Teacher,* Jan. 22, 1969.

Chapter 2

Prelude

By the time calendar year 1970 began, the racial polarization at Franklin K. Lane High School was total. White students had been beaten and terrorized to a degree never before known in New York's long history of public education. And while the theoreticians and social scientists were lightly dismissing the violence, apologizing for it as the only mode of self-expression available to the blacks who had been "miseducated by the system," the seeds for a new generation of racism were being sown. But members of this new generation would have substance enforcing their bigotry, quite different from the know-nothing prejudice of their elders. For these whites had been on the receiving end of a wave of terror that matched anything thrown by Southern whites at black people in the post-1954 era.

The whites blamed Selub most of all, but they were also critical of the police, who, they felt, had been too soft on the criminal elements operating within the school. The degeneration continued in spite of the fact that by year's end there were still seven policemen on patrol within the building.

The white parents complained about their children coming home with marks on their bodies from beatings at the hands of black youths, and of extortions, and of futile attempts to resist. They were convinced that Selub had "sold out" to the blacks. They cited charges made by their children about a different standard of school behavior for blacks and whites, with whites alone penalized for certain infractions. It galled them that many blacks refused to rise for the morning pledge of allegiance exercise. And they felt that blacks were given preferential treatment, pointing to the large number of college scholarships supposedly open to all, but which they felt were awarded to blacks in disproportionate numbers. The white parents had reached the conclusion that it was the policy of the school to reward violence and bigotry with college scholarships. And many couldn't believe the depths to which the school had sunk as police patrols stood guard as if the clientele were inmates in a penitentiary rather than students in an American public school. Whatever glimmer of hope existed for an integrated society, was, as far as these whites were concerned, extinguished. And they could say without the slightest hesitation, as did one harried mother:

> I'm sick of it, sick of knowing my son has to endure two more years of hell in Lane. That's why I'm taking him out of here and enrolling him in a private school. I can't afford it, but I talked it over with my husband and we'll borrow the money.
>
> It'll be worth it just for once to see him smile when he leaves the house for school. He's learned one thing at this school that isn't listed on the program. Franklin K. Lane has given him a good lesson in hatred!"[1]

The white students themselves freely complained about the breakdown in discipline. They watched outsiders roam the halls and were bitter about Selub giving in to the demands of black militants. They felt they had been sacrificed, that Selub had completely capitulated to the blacks, and that as white students they were considered intruders by the school's black majority. They charged that Selub had followed a policy of appeasement, of constantly giving in, and of playing politics with their education.

And while the school bureaucrats were telling the public that

Lane was simply a microcosm of society, and that what was happening there was only a reflection of events in the nation at large, a fifteen-year-old white girl, one of the assault victims, was saying:

> I consider myself a liberal person and I always took an active part in civil rights, but not any more. I've seen too much. When the riot broke out in the cafeteria and the bomb went off last Wednesday my girlfriend and I headed for the doors. Five black girls grabbed me and held me while another one punched me in the stomach. My girlfriend started to run and a black girl grabbed her and tried to rip her blouse off. I kept screaming, "why, why?", but they were acting like animals, just beating up any white girl they saw. I started to cry. I wanted to run home and never come back to this place again.[2]

While conditions reached a frightening climax in 1969, a year of unprecedented racial turmoil at Lane, the turn of events was not at all unexpected. Nor can it be explained solely in terms of the newly awakened black consciousness that was sweeping the nation.

For more than four years prior to the disaster of 1969 the Lane staff had been witness to repeated acts of violence committed by black youngsters. Teachers continually cried out against the growing lawlessness, but their pleas almost always fell on deaf ears. In 1966 teachers who dared speak out against the deterioration of school tone were labeled "hysterical" by the administration. As the school fell apart in the mid sixties, so did its faculty. Once a stable and tightly knit unit, the 1965–69 period saw some of the most competent and experienced teachers find their way out of Lane.

As discipline problems increased, the deans objected to their hands being tied by the administration, which, they believed, had become overly guidance-oriented with the elevation of Mrs. Mary Cohen, an English instructor, to an assistant principalship (in charge of guidance). Their major complaint was that they were being compelled to keep on the rolls the most violent hard-core delinquents. There were a series of clashes between Cohen and various deans. She stayed, they left. Four different deans transferred out of the school over a three-year span, a loss of top-caliber personnel who could not easily be replaced.

The 1965–68 period was the prelude. Those who saw the handwriting on the wall and had enough seniority, transferred out. Those in the middle found themselves locked in. And the new young teachers, bursting with energy and enthusiasm after graduating from college, ran to greener pastures where they could teach rather than play policeman. Those who stayed hoped against hope that the downward spiral would by some miracle be reversed. The chronicle of that prelude is a story of educational politics, of administrative ineptitude, and of growing teacher militancy as a reaction to increasing student violence.

In 1962 Lane was not very much different from most of the other fifty-nine academic high schools in the New York metropolitan area, except for the fact that it had an integrated student body (28.7 percent black) long before integration became a public issue. Harry Eisner, Lane's principal from 1948 to 1962, was a strong believer in the concept of integration, and even though all was not peaceful on the racial scene during the 1950s, the faculty maintained its deep-rooted belief in integrated education. Eisner had been a magnificent administrator and was respected by students and teachers, blacks and whites. During his tenure even those youngsters who were not college bound received an education which was, in many ways, superior to what the average academic student was getting at Lane in 1969.

As the board's program of reverse segregation took form in the early 1960s, due largely to segregated housing patterns, the deterioration of Franklin K. Lane was set in motion. Harry Eisner retired from the public school system in 1962, and after his highly competent assistant, Jacob Peshkin, served as caretaker for six months, James J. O'Connell was appointed to the principalship in February, 1963. O'Connell had started out in the school system in 1930 as a teacher of English, advanced to a departmental chairmanship in 1952, and became an elementary school principal six years later. In 1962 he passed his third promotional examination in ten years and was elevated to a high school principalship.

He was assigned to Lane at a time when the 110 Livingston Street bureaucracy was pondering the fate of the school. It was decided that Lane would be the safety valve for Brooklyn, the place to send the bulk of the black students coming out of the junior high schools in the Central Brooklyn ghetto. They would be crammed into Lane, more and more each year, youngsters with long records of conviction for felonious crimes, youngsters who were academically disoriented, emotionally unstable, illiterate, socially maladjusted, and an increasing number hooked on hard drugs long before the city took cognizance of the spreading evil in its high schools. Neither O'Connell, the union, nor the local community had any say over the death blow that was dealt to Lane by these zoning policies of the early 1960s.

Often, when O'Connell tried to suspend a black youngster, he found himself challenged by his superior, District 19 Superintendent Margaret Douglas. Douglas was the second-highest-ranking black administrator in the system and she wanted to know why most of the suspended youngsters were black. The relationship between O'Connell and Douglas was trying, to say the least. In 1967, when he had the opportunity to transfer to another school, closer to his Long Island home, he grabbed the chance and said good-bye to Lane High School. He was a devoted schoolman, but he had been put down and overruled by his superiors at the district level and central headquarters. The 150 teachers who gathered in a local restaurant in June, 1967, to wish him well felt a deep sense of loss and were truly saddened to hear him admit to his administration's failings. But those closest to him knew that as a nontenured principal his arm had been twisted many times, first by Dorothy Bonowit, the Queens high school superintendent, and later by Margaret Douglas* . . . when the high schools were placed under the jurisdiction of local school boards. Major decisions affecting the school were made at the top, often without his knowledge or consent, and sometimes over his explicit objections.

On the other end O'Connell found himself faced with a strong and militant union chapter. The teacher leadership of Lane was bent on preserving the school as an institution of learning and unwilling to surrender to the school board's hypocrisy on the question of integration or safety in the schools. Starting when George Altomare came to Lane in 1956, the school had developed an active union orientation. There had been a long history of chapter initiative, and in 1965 the chapter chairman, Carl Golden, directed the research of a comprehensive study showing the trend toward reverse segregation at Lane High School. The study, a slap at the board's zoning policy, revealed that Lane had been singled out by the school board as a means of sidestepping the integration issue (see Chapter 4). Golden had gotten the ball rolling, and in 1966 George Himonidis, the new UFT chairman, took up the fight. Himonidis, a social studies teacher and a candidate for a doctoral degree from Columbia University, had leadership qualities that won him the respect of the entire staff. Endowed with a scholarly intellect, articulate, highly personable, and a clever strategist to boot, he rallied the faculty in 1966 and 1967 to give teachers hope and a sense of purpose. His outstanding leadership served as a shot in the arm to a disgruntled and demoralized staff.

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*Dorothy Bonowit died in 1969, Douglas in 1967.

There was little that the UFT chapter could do about the broken promises of 1965 and the unkept pledges of zoning superintendent Jacob Landers to correct the gerrymander that had kept all but a tiny section of Queens (Woodhaven) out of Lane district and added on more and more of the Bedford-Stuyvesant ghetto. But zoning was only one of several issues important to the new chapter chairman. For Himonidis, decidedly liberal, a changing student body did not have to mean anarchy and chaos, and he was a constant thorn in O'Connell's side as he forced the administration to maintain standards of discipline consistent with universal concepts of law and justice.

During the 1962–66 period the rate of daily student attendance dropped in direct proportion to the percentage rise of its nonwhite enrollment (see Appendix C). The union chapter was first to call attention to this monumental truancy problem. Complicating the growing absentee rate was the growth of student cutting which the school found itself unable to control. There was little or no follow-up on offenders and the existing feeling among the students was that they could cut with impunity. Lateness was still another serious problem which increased as more black students came in by train from the outlying black communities. It wasn't at all unusual for hundreds of students to queue up, day after day, to get a late admission pass hours after the start of the school day. Lastly, and most serious, was the matter of asocial behavior, an emanation in part of black frustration and of black resentment toward the white community for making them feel uncomfortable in that neighborhood. Furthermore, the black students were angry about having to cope with subjects requiring the fundamental skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic with which they had never been provided in the earlier grades. And as a consequence, blacks experienced a sense of inferiority through having to compete with better-trained white students in academic classes or being placed in the nonacademic course of study for slow learners unable to do college preparatory work.

O'Connell's inability to deal with the school's mounting problems brought his policies under fire in the fall of 1966, when a UFT council statement zeroed in on the growing menace. A chapter resolution began:

> A dangerous and explosive atmosphere has existed at Lane High School since the opening of school in September. There have been numerous cases of students being set upon, threatened, and/or beaten both on school grounds and in the immediate vicinity thereof. The situation has deteriorated to the point where a teacher responsible for maintaining order in the student cafeteria was attacked, kicked in the stomach, and sustained injuries requiring hospital treatment. Many of these outbreaks have had racial overtones and have not been confined to boys alone.[3]

And this was a full two and one-half years prior to the collapse of January, 1969!

The racial crisis was out in the open by 1966. Society at large had not yet begun the great debate about "racism in the Northern schools" and the attention of the civil rights movement was still, for the most part, confined to the South. Lane was in every sense both a forerunner and a prototype as early as 1965. Integration, poorly planned and recklessly implemented, had taken its toll on what had been a fine public school a few years earlier. All the danger signals were there in 1965, but the human element was never a primary concern of the school bureaucrats, who dealt with charts and statistics and for whom a student was merely a number. Youngsters who disliked and distrusted each other were thrown together with absolutely no understanding of the other's needs or life style. Mutual hostility grew as impoverished blacks and subsistence whites scratched and clawed at each other; the whites struggling to hold onto the little piece they had carved out for themselves, and the blacks pitted against them for a share of the action. But Lane High School sat way back in the distant crotch of nowhere, on the border where two counties intersect, and the attitude of the school board was: *We don't care what kind of problems you're having between the blacks and whites, just keep things quiet out there!*

By October, 1966, after repeated incidents of racial violence against teachers and students, the UFT Chapter Council unanimously passed a resolution seeking to pressure school authorities:

"Should the emergency situation continue without abatement," the resolution concluded, "and all other means of restoring a healthy educational atmosphere fail, we could not in good conscience fail to support those teachers who for reasons of personal safety would choose not to honor such assignments [to cafeteria and hall patrol where most of the violent acts took place]."[4]

While O'Connell was taken to task by the union chapter, the UFT leaders also offered him the opportunity to join with them in a campaign directed at the school board's policies. It was a campaign to secure the assignment of additional nonprofessional security personnel. For almost six months, extending into the spring of 1967, there was an ongoing exchange of letters between Himonidis—requesting more security services—and Assistant Superintendent Maurice Hopkins, former head of the High School Office. A typical Hopkins response to an urgent plea for assistance was: "The number of school aides available for assignment to the high schools is limited by the budget," and, "Obviously, this emergency cannot be expected to continue indefinitely."[5]

O'Connell was caught in the middle. He knew that the union was fighting his battle, but to support the chapter leaders meant embarrassing his superiors. And that, of course, was contrary to the cardinal rule. The chapter carried the same message to District Superintendent Douglas. Still no relief.

O'Connell, himself, finally wrote to Hopkins, telling him that he needed more security personnel to protect the health and safety of staff and students. In reporting one particular melee in the cafeteria he told Hopkins: "An outbreak of violence in our cafeteria during the third period yesterday resulted in serious injury to one of our school aides. Specifically, Mr. Herman Goodman was struck on the head with a chair. The resulting wound required fifteen stitches."[6]

The Goodman assault was only one of many against the staff during the 1966-67 school year. The contagion spread. In addition to assaults against students, aides, and teachers, there was an endless stream of reports about vile and abusive language, and of overt criminal activity in the school. How could any one not see, in 1966, the path on which the school was embarked as its nonwhite population climbed to 54.8 percent? There could be no quality education for any students in this climate of fear and tension.

George Altomare had given up his union vice presidency in 1964 to take a full-time job as a UFT organizer, but he returned to his teaching post at Lane in 1967 to qualify as a bona fide candidate so he could recapture his old title in the next union election. The matter of the disruptive child was already shaping up as a key strike issue as the contract talks proceeded in the spring of 1967. When Himonidis decided to lead the Lane chapter into a confrontation with school authorities on the issue of student violence, Altomare was there, and he was instrumental in drawing up the list of demands that were presented to Douglas. The Lane chapter, through its local action, helped solidify the union's disruptive child stance, which placed the burden of blame on the school board for having failed to provide special facilities for emotionally disturbed youngsters.

Lane was not the only school where teachers were being assaulted in 1967, and in a general statement to the public during its negotiations for a new contract, the union declared:

> Whenever there are threats against teachers, effective police protection must be provided. . . . Many of the present problems stem from past failures of the Board of Education. UFT is initiating a positive program of cooperation with parents and community groups through the establishment of teacher-parent-community councils in each school. . . . Let us work toward programs to improve educational performance, not create situations which will insure an exodus of qualified people from the city schools.[7]

The union's disruptive-child program was its Armageddon. During the fourteen-day strike of September, 1967, anti-union forces told the black community that white UFT teachers didn't want to teach their children and that the union was looking for a way to throw black children out of school and into the streets. There was little the UFT could do to combat that kind of misrepresentation, and the union's negotiators were forced to back off. In the end they were made to swallow as a face-saver the mere inclusion in the contract of a school board administrative circular setting forth an overly complicated procedure for removing disruptive children which was understood by very few and almost impossible to administer. For all practical purposes, the disruptive child issue was buried in 1967, and with it would die schools all over New York.

Morton Selub replaced James J. O'Connell as Lane's principal in September, 1967, and Hyman Bursky and Jim Lewis were elected as the new cochairmen of the UFT chapter, replacing Himonidis, who had become disgusted with the board's continued neglect of the school. The 1967–68 school year followed a similar pattern. Bursky and Lewis, the latter being the first black union chairman in the school, carried forth the quest for more security personnel and worked hard to make the newly created faculty discipline committee a viable unit that would function in the best interests of students as well as teachers. The purpose of the five-member committee, recognized as a de jure school body by the administration, was to refer special problems of student behavior directly to the district superintendent and make sure that teacher concerns were adequately represented at suspense hearings.

But in 1968 Hopkins was still playing the game of holding back on sufficient security allocations until a crisis arose. The new chairmen wrote to remind him that "Lane is one of the largest school buildings, over a quarter mile around (on each of five floors), and with numerous entrances." It was also noted by the chairmen that Lane was one of the most difficult schools as evidenced by the record number of assaults against teachers and students. "Assaults continue to occur here at Lane," they concluded, "despite the efforts of the Guidance Committee to improve teacher-student relations and to eliminate some of the sources of tension."[8]

Nearly eighty new teachers (representing about 30 percent of the faculty), most on their very first professional assignment, were employed at Lane in 1967 to keep up with the skyrocketing student register and to replace those who, like James J. O'Connell, had become fed up with the turmoil of recent years and left the school. With a student enrollment of almost 5,400 in a building constructed for 3,800, each lunch period saw 1,000 students packed into the basement cafeteria. The close contact only exacerbated existing tensions between the races. With these tensions mounting there was no comparable increase in the security force, nor were any special programs introduced to bridge the gap between neighborhood youngsters and those transported in from the ghetto. No one was quite sure what was coming next.

By March, 1968, there were sustained outbreaks that stopped just short of mushrooming into full-scale race riots. Fights, thefts, and vandalism were becoming commonplace. Many teachers, convinced that neither the principal nor the school board would back them up, chose to shun their responsibility of providing for school security if it meant jeopardizing their own safety. The very last thing a teacher wanted was a confrontation with a student, one that might result in violence. Even Selub had told them not to stand in a student's path if the student refused to stop at the teacher's command. Teachers, too, had become increasingly aware of the dangers to themselves and had learned to look the other way. One female teacher, angered over an incident in which she felt teachers were shirking their duty, wrote a letter to Selub, saying:

> Recently, I had occasion to help control a large group of students in the auditorium while a fight was broken up. This brawl had, in my opinion, riot potential. I found myself in this role because other teachers, some of them male teachers, refused to get involved, and passed by. While it is true, school teachers are not peace officers, and are not expected to place themselves in a position of possibly incurring personal injury, there are ways of assuring proper supervision within their control. . . .
>
> The apathy displayed by some of our teachers who have voiced great concern in the "interest and welfare of children" is appalling. . . . Perhaps we will go along, doing nothing constructive, preferring the path of least resistance. That path, however, leads away from scholarship and decency in our school, away from good citizenship and responsibility in our society and towards decay and destruction of both education and humanity.[9]

In 1968 it was apparent to everybody within earshot of Lane that no constructive educational program was being conducted at the school. Indeed, what had once been considered the exception—the emergency occurrence—had now become the norm. Lane was a public school seething with frustration and discontent. Racial conflict was spurred on by a growing narcotics problem which school and city officials chose to ignore, a problem which by 1970 had completely overwhelmed educational and law enforcement officials.

Finally, the new principal, Morton Selub, had never managed to win the trust and confidence of his staff, and they blamed him for the crisis. Experienced teachers left in droves during the 1967–68 period. Even the UFT diehards, defeated in their efforts to reverse the demise, got out . . . Himonidis to a suburban school system, Bursky on a transfer to a top academic school in northeast Queens, Altomare back to the union with a full-time vice presidency. Teachers weren't the only ones to flee. Anyone who could find a place to go, went.

Joining teachers in the flight from Lane were the white parents, who began finding ways of avoiding the enrollment of their children there. By giving the false address of a relative or friend, many were able to get their youngsters registered in nearby John Adams or Richmond Hill high schools. The white flight reached irreversible proportions, it seemed, just four years after the school board had issued an integration plan in 1963, stating its goals:

> In the years since the historic 1954 decision of the United States Supreme Court, and even earlier, the New York City Public Schools have pursued earnestly their commitment to the objective of racial integration in the schools. Much has been accomplished. Nevertheless, our midsummer 1963 stocktaking makes it clear that much more has to be done. Our past programs and activities were appropriate for their time, but we now propose to embark on a new series of endeavors which we hope will hasten the day when our city is completely integrated and all of our children will enjoy equal educational opportunity. We believe that school integration is an important part of our pursuit of excellence for all children.[10]

That noble dream of 1963 had turned into a nightmare by 1968, and mass hysteria by 1969. Nobody could say that the Lane breakdown came about unexpectedly, that there wasn't time for correction and stabilization, or that it all happened too fast. There *was* time, plenty of it, and all the signs and warnings had been there since Carl Golden wrote his 1965 analysis (see Chapter 4) predicting the events that took place in the fall of 1969. But the bureaucrats at 110 Livingston Street weren't listening, and everyone was either too busy, or too preoccupied, or just didn't give a damn!

In 1968 an official United States Government Report told the nation that we are moving toward two societies, "one predominantly white and located in the suburbs . . . and one largely Negro, located in the central cities."[11]

Franklin K. Lane High School had become living evidence of that polarization.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. *New York Sunday News,* Nov. 9, 1969.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Minutes, Lane UFT Chapter Council, Oct. 27, 1966.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Letter to Lane UFT Chapter Chairman George Himonidis from Assistant Superintendent Maurice Hopkins, Nov. 30, 1966.
6. Letter to Assistant Superintendent Maurice Hopkins from James J. O'Connell, Lane principal, March 2, 1967.
7. UFT Statement, May 24, 1967.
8. Letter to Assistant Superintendent Maurice Hopkins from Lane UFT Chapter Chairman Hyman Bursky, Dec. 5, 1967.
9. Letter to Morton Selub, Lane principal, from Mary E. Roche (teacher), March 15, 1968.
10. Board of Education, City of New York, *Plan for Integration,* August 1963.
11. Report of National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968.

Chapter 3

A Court Case and More Crises

In February, 1969, it was not expected that the single session and the reduction of the student body would be a panacea for all the school's ills. Ten years of prolonged neglect could not be overcome with a simple administrative shift. But as a result of the Siracusa affair, and the public outcry which ensued, the UFT chapter was successful, at least, in setting forth minimal safety conditions under which teachers would teach and children learn. The chapter had been forced into assuming a leadership role, a role the school administration and board officials had refused to play. With it went the responsibility of bearing the criticism for the consequences of its action.

The faculty had brought to the public's attention for the first time that which educational officials had always kept well hidden. In carrying that burden, Lane's teachers were compelled to suffer intolerable abuse. They were accosted from the left and from the right. Having adopted a middle-ground position of favoring integration and opposing the black militants, the teachers had alienated both extremes. The aftermath of the January anarchy was to take on added dimensions as the school year dragged on.

During the three-day shutdown (January 22–24) which followed the burning, the school administration worked to reduce the size of the student body to the 4,350 figure which could be accommodated on a single session. Selub and his assistants, Cohen and Todaro, had decided to utilize the services of the Bureau of Attendance to bring about the reduction. Truants who were over the age of seventeen were discharged. Those under seventeen were referred to the Attendance Bureau with the expectation that those wishing to continue their education could do so at some other high school as assigned by the Office of Central Placement. In all cases, letters were sent to parents asking them to appear at the school if they wanted their children kept on the rolls. Few came. Practically all of the 678 youngsters who were thus removed from the rolls fell into either of two groupings. One category of students was known in the jargon as "ghosts." These were youngsters who were officially on the school register but had disappeared with neither the school nor the Attendance Bureau able to locate them. The other group was referred to as the "drop-ins," youngsters who would come to school for a few days and then stay out for weeks, sometimes even months, at a time. There were so many in this category who repeated the truancy pattern several times in the course of a semester that it was impossible for the school to keep tabs on them or to provide the kind of special services they required. The drop-ins were an especially troublesome group because when they did come they only attended some of their classes and for most of the day roamed the building, often creating turmoil. The fact that they were in school so infrequently made the problem doubly difficult since they were, for all practical purposes, anonymous. That anonymity prevented the school from either helping them or protecting the rest of the student body from their dangerous behavior.

It didn't take long for the anti-UFT forces to get themselves together into what they called an SOS (Save Our Students) committee. The anti-poverty agencies, operating with federal funds, saw the reduction of the student body as a plot to rid the school of black students. The local agencies of Brownsville and East New York called for a mass rally at their headquarters a week after the terms of the January 21 agreement were disclosed. They flooded the black community with flyers which read:

> HAVE YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM LANE? THE UFT IS TRYING TO GET RID OF ALL BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN STUDENTS AT FRANKLIN LANE! STOP ILLEGAL TRANSFERS *NOW!* ORGANIZE! SAVE OUR STUDENTS![1]

During the next several weeks a number of things occurred to undo the January 21 agreement. Rushing to the rescue of the transferred students was school board vice president Milton Galamison, a black churchman from Bedford-Stuyvesant with a long history of leading school boycotts and of heading up a citywide rump school board. Galamison had been appointed to the de jure board by Lindsay as a result of the 1968 interim decentralization law, which permitted the mayor to stack the board with four additional members who would be receptive to his own radical ideas for "community control" of the schools. Galamison carried on a one-man crusade to find out what had actually taken place on January 21 and who was responsible for the transfers. He argued, and quite correctly, that other schools were far more overcrowded than Lane, and cited some of the most affluent and predominantly white schools which were much more overutilized. Why weren't these schools having difficulty? Galamison wanted to know. The question seemed rhetorical, but to the board vice president the reduction of Lane's register was nothing less than a monstrous purge of black youngsters by the white establishment.

It should be noted in passing that Galamison and the other black leaders who were soon to enter the fray had been completely silent during the preceding three months of turmoil. Not a single voice had been raised, not an iota of leadership from the *responsible* black community was exerted to smother the racial fires. The absence of that kind of adult leadership from the black community was one of the great tragedies of Lane's story. Even the prominent black legislators from Central Brooklyn who were deeply involved with school matters, Assemblyman Samuel Wright and State Senator Waldaba Stewart, had remained on the sidelines during the conflagration.

Galamison wasn't alone in trying to find out what had happened to the 678 transferred students. A number of other black churchmen from a group calling itself the Clergy Vigil attempted to get the names of the transferred students. Led by Calvin Marshall, pastor of the Varick Memorial A.M.E. Church in Brooklyn, and a spokesman for militant black ministers, they accused the central board of using stalling tactics and of purposely hiding the identity of the transferred youngsters whom they wanted to help.

But the big thunder came when Kenneth Clark decided to inject himself directly into the dispute. Clark was the only black member of the Board of Regents, the highest policy making body for education in New York State. He had written a number of books describing the educational deficiencies in ghetto schools, and as a college professor (City College of New York) had achieved the reputation of expert par excellence in the area of urban education. Clark had taken a rather uncompromising position in recent citywide school disputes, was known to favor a very strong community control bill, and was not among the best friends of the teachers' union. His imposing credentials and broad base of strength made him a feared figure to the city's educational bureaucrats. Clark secured the services of the New York Civil Liberties Union, and as the new semester entered its second month the NYCLU filed suit in federal court in behalf of the 678 transferred students. Citing the Fourteenth Amendment, the suit charged that the students' constitutional rights had been violated since they were denied due process and equal protection of the laws. The suit asked the court to declare the named defendants, Doar, Donovan, O'Daly, Selub, and local attendance coordinator Edwin Dannen, in violation of the due process clause and to order the students readmitted; to issue an injunction against any repetition of such dismissals; to order the school board to provide the dismissed students educational opportunities to compensate for the loss of instruction time since the suspension; and for the board to pay financial damages.

The filing of the suit had come about, justifiably, because the board had refused to back up the provisions of the local agreement. Students who had been originally referred to the Bureau of Attendance and wanted to continue their high school education were sent from there to the board's Office of Central Placement. Unfortunately, when they were assigned to other high schools by Central Placement, the youngsters were denied admission on the grounds that they did not reside in the schools' districts. Faced with a revolt by high school principals, many of whom were having their own problems with student unrest, Placement Director Stanley Kingsley took the easier and less threatening course. He assigned those truants right back to O'Daly's District 19 office, dumping the problem back in a lap that was at least partially responsible for creating it. Neither Donovan nor Kingsley wanted an open fight with the high school principals and the communities they would surely rally if Lane's truants were imposed on their schools.

Now it was O'Daly's problem again. Each day more youngsters would show up at her office with a letter from High School Placement authorizing their enrollment in one of the District 19 schools over which she had jurisdiction. Thomas Jefferson was the only other academic high school in the district (there were two vocational high schools) and it was even more overcrowded than Lane. She would not place the transferred students in Jefferson. With her back to the wall and the board backtracking from the January 21 agreement, O'Daly felt morally released from any responsibility to live up to the accord with the Lane chapter. Her next move was to get the truants readmitted to Lane. In her own mind she thought that by sending a few youngsters back each day she would be absolving herself of any wrongdoing connected with their removal, and with a court case looming she was anxious to cover herself.

She hoped to extricate herself from the mess through a private arrangement with Selub to readmit a few of the truants every day, quietly, hoping that nobody would notice. Mary Cohen, who had not been in on the January 21 agreement and who opposed it from the inception, would be the intermediary through whom O'Daly's subterfuge would be accomplished. But teachers soon took cognizance of the readmissions and began voicing their protests. The UFT council, by this time convinced that Selub and O'Daly had conspired to breach the agreement, quickly resolved that "We deplore those attempts to violate the agreements of January 21 and that we reaffirm our intent to take all necessary steps to assure compliance with the understandings and commitments made to the Lane faculty." The resolution went on to emphasize item 3 of the six-point agreement which read: "There will be a freeze on new admissions for the remainder of the school year and no student not included in the original 4,350 maximum student group will be programmed at a later date for Lane High School."[2]

The Selub-O'Daly turnabout was a bitter pill for the staff to swallow, for the teachers felt they were again being deceived. If this provision could be unilaterally breached, they claimed, then the whole agreement was a sham. With faculty pressure beginning to take form, the chapter leaders notified the principal of their intent to call a press conference and announce the subterfuge. As O'Daly groped for a way out, the mayor's office was more than helpful. Cutting through red tape that would normally stall progress for months, Dick Streiter of the School Task Force got clearance from the Fire and Buildings departments in a matter of days authorizing the utilization of rooms in a local church as an annex for the returning truants. The Arlington Avenue Presbyterian Church in Cypress Hills was located about a mile from Lane. School and city officials were hoping that the use of the leased space in the church for special classes for truants who wanted to return would satisfy the Galamison-Clark-NYCLU forces. It didn't.

Shortly before the actual filing of the lawsuit, students were being admitted to the new church annex where four classrooms had been refurbished and supplied with teachers, a guidance counselor, and all necessary materials. The annex arrangement, while meeting with the approval of the staff, Selub, O'Daly, *et al.*, didn't satisfy the Civil Liberties Union, and the suit was filed in federal court in Brooklyn. Several days later, on March 5, Assistant Superintendent Irving Anker came to Lane as Donovan's emissary to try to get the chapter to back off from point 3 and let the truants return without raising a public clamor. Joining Anker at the meeting were Selub, Cohen and Todaro, O'Daly, and Kingsley of Central Placement. Also present was J. David Love.

Anker, who a year later was elevated to the post of acting superintendent of schools, came with the hope of convincing a general faculty committee (to be handpicked by Selub) that the chapter's position on the readmissions issue was self-defeating, and to try to compel me to accept the school board's noncompliance. But Donovan had sent his man with nothing to offer as an inducement and it was clear that the last thing the union chapter would do was keep silent. After I had convinced Anker that an end run around the UFT couldn't be pulled off, I was called into the meeting. Copies of the January 21 agreement were already on the table as various expressions were put forth concerning the administrative difficulties involved with point 3. I maintained that the integrity of the agreement presupposed the fundamental honor of all parties and their willingness to abide by their commitments, and that under no circumstances could we accept a unilateral approach to arbitrarily terminate any aspect of the agreement.

I had hinted that we would certainly be flexible if there was some assurance that a special educational program could be brought into the school and a single session maintained for the next school year. But Anker didn't bite. He was either unable or unwilling to commit himself to any such innovative project. By the end of the meeting the only points of general understanding were that the students who were readmitted would be programmed for the Arlington annex only, that there would be no further readmissions until the annex program became fully operative, and that the eighty-seven students referred to the district office by Kingsley would be assigned to the annex.

Irving Anker returned to his office at 110 Livingston Street and drafted a memorandum to Donovan and his immediate superior Nathan Brown, entitled, " THE FRANKLIN K. LANE SITUATION (THREAT BY UFT CHAPTER CHAIRMAN, MR.

SALTZMAN, THAT THE UFT CHAPTER WAS PLANNING A PRESS CONFERENCE TO CHARGE THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS AND THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR WITH FAILING TO COMPLY WITH THE UNDERSTANDING ARRIVED AT WITH THE CHAPTER IN JANUARY)."

The two-page memorandum reported on the current status of the tranferred students:

"Of the hundreds of students who have been on the suspense register since last term at Lane," Anker reported, "and who have been followed up by the Bureau of Attendance only 138 have been referred to High School Placement for further interviewing and placement. Of this number only 81 have been referred to Mrs. O'Daly's office . . . and Mr. Saltzman seemed to be reassured and indicated no further plans for public confrontation."[3]

What had been initiated as an emergency administrative change soon attracted the attention of other groups. On March 19 the Citizens' Committee for Children released a statement presented at a public meeting of the school board, stating:

"We asked for a meeting to discuss what was happening at Franklin K. Lane High School where children were being removed from school by illegal procedures. . . . And your proposal for temporary annexes certainly does not answer it. . . . No youngster should ever be removed from a regular classroom or a regular school without a fair hearing where he has the right to present his side."[4]

Such was the confusion about what had happened, nobody being quite sure who had done what and under whose authority.

During those months of March and April, practically all of Selub's time was taken up in preparation for the court case. The school board's defense was handled by the city's corporation counsel. From the outset the strategy of the defense was not to prove it had acted within the purview of its powers, but to try, instead, to work out an accommodation that would be acceptable to the Civil Liberties attorneys. After weeks of testimony (to which no UFT representative was called by either the plaintiffs or the defense), Judge Jack B. Weinstein of the United States District Court, Brooklyn, issued an interim ruling based on a show of good faith by the defendants. The judge noted in his findings that Selub and O'Daly "were responding to the orders of superiors and to pressures beyond their control in making the decision which led to the denial of plaintiff's constitutional rights."[5] Weinstein went on to rule that the transferred students had, in fact, been denied their rights of due process. The case was left open pending the implementation of the remediation and compensatory education plan put forth by Selub and O'Daly.

The outcome of the court case was a severe setback for the Lane staff in terms of their long-range goals. Although less than half of the truants ever actually returned, and with most of those dropping out again on their own volition shortly thereafter, what was important was that it gave the board justification to invalidate the other provisions of the agreement and return Lane to the status quo. In future talks with the union, both centrally and locally, board officials would hold the UFT responsible for subjecting it to the embarrassment of a well-publicized court case. Even the promises to give Lane special consideration in the pending rezoning of Brooklyn high schools could now be broken. They were. Another result of the court case was the fact that those groups which had rallied to the defense of the transferred students were also successful in ramming through the state legislature in the final days of the 1969 session an amendment to the education law giving suspended students the right of legal representation at suspense hearings, limiting to five days the amount of time a principal could suspend a student, and preventing a principal from suspending the same student more than twice.

The new legislation forced the board to modify its own policies on suspense procedures, and its revisions adopted in the fall of 1969 made student suspense cases almost as legalistic as a jury trial. The net result was that high schools such as Lane became havens for politically motivated disrupters, junkies, and drug pushers. Few voices were raised against either the new legislation or the board's directive implementing it. Even the UFT was silent, but experienced schoolmen knew that this was but another political step toward the slow and methodical destruction of public education in New York.

The school board decided to do nothing about the new suspense law that spring, and without direction from the top many district superintendents refused to process cases regardless of the infraction for fear of unknowingly violating the new law. Elizabeth O'Daly's resentment against the union in general and me in particular had reached new heights with the court case. She blamed the union for getting her into that legal predicament, and now with the new state law she arbitrarily decreed that there would be no more suspense cases brought to her office. The situation became ludicrous when she ordered Selub to retain one particular youngster with a long police record who had been suspended for the five-day maximum period for having assaulted a teacher. Within the school administration opinion was unanimous that this youngster was a menace and that his presence in school constituted a very real danger to students and teachers. Challenging O'Daly's refusal to support Selub's efforts to remove the student the UFT chapter wrote: "Who will bear the responsibility if this youngster, or any of the others you refuse to see, commits an act that results in an unspeakable tragedy?"[6]

Two weeks earlier there had been another outbreak of the racial violence which had continued on and off all during the spring term, and it was noted that the most recent round coincided with O'Daly's lifting of the suspense of militants who had been excluded from school and/or arrested for leading a riot the week before. In this most recent outburst on May 9, black and white youths clashed in the cafeteria and a number of fires were set. In criticizing O'Daly for having overridden Selub's suspense order after five days, I issued a statement to the press, saying:

> The District Superintendent [O'Daly] apparently felt that the health and safety of 4,300 students was unimportant. How does anybody expect to see an end to violence when administrators at all levels are engaged in wholesale coddling of student militants? You are never going to have peace in the high schools as long as local school and

> district officials refuse to deal with terrorism by quasi-criminal elements.[7]

O'Daly's reaction was immediate and intense. For two years she had resented the growing influence of the union and what she viewed as its encroachments into areas such as community relations, which had traditionally been left as the exclusive domain of the district head. She had sincerely tried, she believed, to establish and maintain a workable relationship with the UFT. But my having exposed her to public ridicule was more than she could tolerate. On May 13 she decided to break off all relations with the UFT (except for the grievance procedure which was mandated by the citywide contract) and she wrote to the chapter chairmen in the district's thirty-one schools: "In recent weeks your District Chairman, Mr. Harold Saltzman, has resorted to several unjustified personal attacks against me in the newspapers. . . . I find it impossible to continue my attempts to cooperate under these circumstances."[8]

The matter of suspense procedures was not settled in the spring of 1969. The militants continued to wreak havoc in the school. The cadres of disaffected blacks whom they continued to turn on and off kept the fires of hatred and bigotry burning. Few newspaper accounts addressed the naked horrors being enacted at Lane and at a score of other city schools. But at about the same time as the New York State Legislature was guaranteeing (de facto) the right of racists to turn the public schools into battlegrounds, Joseph Alsop, a nationally syndicated columnist, visited New York's high schools and wrote his own observation of the drama that was unfolding:

> What is going on, in plain truth, is nothing more or less than an attempt to take over the New York City schools by far out extremists, both black and white. Their tools are hot-headed kids—in most schools, a small minority—and those people in the "black community," again a small minority, whom the black extremists can lead by the nose.
>
> "Community control" is the slogan, "extremists' control" is the aim, and behind this aim is the larger purpose of using the schools for propaganda and indoctrination, including black racist propaganda that might embarrass the Ku Klux Klan.

> And if all this goes on and gets worse as seems likely, some very hard choices will unavoidably have to be made.[9]

But 1969 was a year when few dared to speak out against the terror for fear of being given a racist label at worst, at best being tagged a reactionary in an era of sweeping change. To expose bigotry was to be a bigot. Nor were our political institutions healthy in this climate of fear. It had been traditional at Lane for there to be assembly programs at election time in which student speakers would debate in support of the different candidates. But 1969 was a year when political differences couldn't be honestly and openly expressed in a social studies classroom, much less a school auditorium in front of a thousand students. While most white teachers and students favored the Democratic candidate, Mario Procaccino, over incumbent John Lindsay in the mayoralty race, most kept their preference well concealed. The comptroller's law and order campaign had been interpreted in the ghetto as being aimed directly at the black community, and the black students of Lane equated support of Procaccino with racism. There could be no political discussions at Lane when teachers and students were afraid to talk about the candidates and issues.

Perhaps Rabbi Meir Kahane, head of the Jewish Defense League (a militant group that sprung up during the 1968 school strike in reaction to black anti-Semitism), best described the fear-paralysis. He was writing about the take-over at Cornell University by rifle-toting black militants, an act which shocked the nation. But the man who saw in Cornell another Weimar, could just as easily have been talking about Lane High School when he said:

> For 36 hours they broke the law while the lemmings who preside over the school also presided over the beginning of its destruction. In grandiose spinelessness, they watched. . . . In magnificent timidity they did nothing as hoodlums—masquerading as oppressed students—wreaked their havoc on the building and on the rule of civilization.
>
> Blame the student fascists? They are not the major culprits. They are the hoodlums and gangsters parading as aggrieved revolutionaries. But they are not the main culprits.
>
> It is the men who allowed this incredible assault on democracy and

> society who must bear the main brunt of the wrath of every sane and shaken citizen. The unbelievable scene of college officials capitulating—no, more than that, for here was capitulation with degradation . . .
>
> These insulated theoreticians of life fail so miserably to understand the extremist mind—the mind that is immune to compromise, to reason, to the warmth of inter-personal relationships. These gravediggers of the campus fail to realize that the extremist knows no limits, that no concession is meaningful to him, that self-hate and self-destruction drive him to destroy all others with him.[10]

After the smoke had settled from the January disaster, different approaches were taken to "reach out" to the militants who had destroyed the integrity of a school and along with it the dream so many had held for an open society. People were going off in different directions searching for the formula that could put the school back together. Not everyone agreed with the basic assumptions of the chapter leadership. For the twenty anti-union teachers who had broken into the school during the 1968 strike, a major cause of the crisis was the union chapter's "reactionary" posture. They formed a Committee of Concerned Teachers, and ten of them put their names to a position paper attacking the UFT chapter and offering instead "A Constructive Analysis of Lane High School," in which they wrote:

> The series of strikes by the UFT in the beginning of this term has produced an unfortunate atmosphere. The series of strikes has caused an increased student alienation and frustration . . .
>
> There has been a history of racial tensions at Lane for many years, including the distribution of anonymous racist and anti-semitic literature. It has been suggested that communication at Lane between staff and students had broken down. Yet, it is questionable that there was ever any real dialogue at Lane. Communication can only exist in an atmosphere free from fear and intimidation. The act of communication should neither assign blame, nor fear pointing the accusing finger. Without this climate the facade of communication disintegrates, and all efforts are doomed to failure.[11]

Most of Lane's teachers were angry at the insinuation that they were "not concerned" about and "insensitive" to the needs of black youngsters. Most of them had been raised and schooled in the liberal tradition and were deeply committed to progressive goals. Many had been active in the civil rights movement long before it became the "in thing." Others had participated in boycotts and other kinds of demonstrations hand in hand with blacks. A great many had established close ties, indeed friendships, with black students. And several had offered their homes as refuge to troubled youngsters and gave financial assistance to students of indigent families. In short, they felt that they had done more for black youngsters, without ever asking for ceremonial credit. How resentful they were at being called "unconcerned." One instructor, Jerome Sager, responded to the Concerned Teachers with an open letter to the faculty, expressing the dedication and frustration of most teachers of inner-city schools who labor under tremendous imposts and often are the scapegoats for cowardly administrators, starving educational systems, and social ills. "TO THE FACULTY OF LANE HIGH SCHOOL," Sager began:

> I find myself at this time compelled to express certain feelings which I have until now kept to myself. I am writing this partly because I am just one of many who are content in knowing they have tried their best to do their jobs, but mostly because I did not want to fan the fires of dissension which have arisen in our school and which apparently will continue to burn unless we extinguish them once and for all.
>
> I find myself feeling angrier each time I hear someone say to me, "You must have genuine feelings for your students," or, "Your attitude must be improved." I have been teaching at Lane for seven years now and can sleep well at night knowing that I do a damn good job at school. I, like most of my colleagues, work hard to try to help every student in every way possible. The students that come to school ready and willing to accept the help we offer receive this help from us without the slightest thought of color or religion entering our minds. The effort, preparation, and diligence of our staff is, for the most part, unquestionable.
>
> It is for these reasons that I resent being told in any general way that I, as well as others, am not doing my job. What rights does anyone have to imply these things to the press, at faculty meetings, or even at social gatherings? These implications, so vague and general in nature, are accepted as truths by many who hear them. Why must we be forced to defend ourselves against such untruths?
>
> We know in our hearts how hard we are trying; we know how much we want our students to excel. These efforts are the things we should be proud of . . .[12]

In spite of these divisions, teachers with differing points of view did try to come together during the three-day closing in January by holding workshops on various aspects of the Lane problem. One such workshop was on "racism" in the school. For three days teachers met to express their views and opinions about what had caused the breakdown. The meetings represented a cross-section of teachers; male and female, liberal and conservative, young and old, union and anti-union, black and white, all searching . . . and blaming.

The minutes of one of the workshop sessions, recorded by its secretary, Bruce Noble, provide some insights into varying teacher attitudes:

CHAIRMAN: Asked for a definition of racism.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: It is discrimination solely on the basis of race.

MR. L: Spoke of the history of slavery, of oppressors and oppressed. The oppressor is usually bigoted. Recently the black man has rebutted that bigotry.

MR. B: All of the slaves were black.

CHAIRMAN: What are the general trends of how whites tend to treat blacks; particularly here at Lane. Let's show each other what we're doing.

MR. B: There has always been some racial tension in this school and neighborhood. Formerly, there was a black minority in the school; now there is a black majority. But there has always been racism. What is the "old Lane"?

MRS. M: I understand that formerly, it was student vs. student, usually in gangs; there were no real racial difficulties between teacher and student.

MR. G: We'll never return to the old Lane; let's talk about Lane today.

MRS. B: Cites incidents of discrimination coming from the Board of Ed.—fact that she was a WASP, and that WASPs have been blamed for problems in the schools. Racism exists in all places, and between whites.

MR. T: Perhaps I'm bigoted . . . Cites incident with black student in the cafeteria. Student resists. White teacher, white dean. Common problem: student feels he's being picked on because he's black. What can we do to stop this Now!

MISS K: One possible solution is having a black dean.

MR. L: "Police" to black people is a dirty name. When the police are white . . . we should import a black dean, if possible.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: Color is not important. We've had a black dean. If we didn't have attacks, we wouldn't need police.

MR. L: Administration and teachers are at fault to have let the situation disintegrate so that the police were necessary. (Previous speaker voices disagreement.) UFT leadership was also at fault. The building was completely unattended. In the auditorium before the strike, there were 600 kids, 2 teachers. (Much cross-conversation.)

MRS. M: Cites cafeteria; you'll get trouble even with supervision.

MR. L: Agrees, but: we're approaching a police state . . . I don't have a solution. We, our society, can do anything we want. Why don't we get together and try?

CHAIRMAN: Many teachers didn't go on building assignments.

MR. H: I advocate limited teacher patrols, but women should not be on patrol. Cites incident in hall where girl student grabbed woman aid; 3 men, including a policeman, were needed to control the student . . . Teachers should not be policemen.

CHAIRMAN: Let's shift away from the issue of police.

MRS. S: I was there at the time of the incident; I objected to the approach taken by the aide.

MR. S: Let's get back to the committee on racism. What happened to the dialogue between teachers and students? What is causing these anti-social acts? What can we do? The "Concerned Teachers' " statement emphasized patrol and control. What is really wrong? What can we do?

MR. B: As a signer of that statement, we want to approach the whole Lane community; our statement in part was a response to the UFT's attempts to speak only to Woodhaven-Cypress Hills. Also, we should take long range steps, e.g., changes in curriculum. We could have more remedial work—materials available for it in my field (social studies). Also we could have more black authority figures in the school.

Mr. S: The UFT is interested in a dialogue with the entire community. In regard to social studies, you can help with their reading. (Mr. B: "I have".) Dubious about the effectiveness of black authority figures in cutting down teacher antagonisms. Beating people up is an immediate problem.

Mr. P: Coming back to the topic of racism—says Mr. B. is advocating going back to black teachers for black students in black schools; pre-1954. Our license does not stipulate the race of the students we are qualified to teach. Our license says we should teach, not be policemen. Suggests teachers should help one another when problems arise.

Mr. V: Times have changed drastically in the last ten years. The Negro is searching for his identity; white people don't like it. Vietnam protests and college demonstrations have filtered down to high school students. Whites think they can do something *to* the Negroes to solve the problem. This is a corollary to our antiquated idea of education—what teachers *do* to students. Most important; students have an identity; teachers tend to talk down to students. We should have a real dialogue with students, expecially the troublemakers.

Mr. U: There has been a rapid social change. A generation gap exists between most students and teachers. . . . This is a white society; it is a white problem. Times have changed from the integrationist period of the early 60's. Now there is a lack of good faith: students lack good faith in teachers. Black teachers frequently command more listening power with black students than do white teachers. And our students are not unique. Students accept less now; they question things more and more, demand more. It's queer that there are no students here. It takes more and greater visible signs from us for blacks to accept us as concerned human beings. We should openly demonstrate more faith in students; for example by giving them more power in making school policy.

Mr. O: I hope we aren't listened to because we're black or white. Our students will meet all kinds of people in our society . . . I object to the Lane Reporter editorial ("Photostatic Education").

MISS B: I didn't write the editorial. It's a student newspaper, expressing student opinions. No one has contacted me personally or the staff about the editorial. We have been accused by innuendo.

CHAIRMAN: We're skirting the issue of racism at Lane H.S.; We should talk about "not caring" teachers; about excessive concern with academic students compared to general students. We don't look at him (the general student) as a person. (Cries of "no", NO.)

MR. O: Opinions in this school run the gamut of those in society. We should make our students aware of the diversity of opinions.

MR. T.: I've been a substitute for 4 years, in many high schools. There has been a difference in approach and attitude on the part of teachers when they give me work; they give me lots of work with academic classes, say "do what you want" with general classes. This is a generalization. Academic students are mostly white, general students mostly black. Draw your own conclusions.

MRS. M: Is this a racial attitude, or a discrimination based on whether the student is academic or general? Granted, teachers have more regard for academic students. (Much cross-conversation.)

MR. G: The fact that these attitudes exist *is* important: that is, students do have attitudes toward education, teachers, etc. How can we correct these attitudes? What is our role, here in the classroom, in the halls? Our attention has traditionally been focused more on academic students. Our general and commercial students are primarily black. The student realizes this: that he is not getting as much attention. What can we do to correct this attitude?

MISS R: I've seen 20-40 studies on general vs. academic classes. In one study 5 black students from general classes were placed randomly in academic classes and they did significantly better than they had before. It is the attitude of the teacher that makes the difference.

MR. D: How is this racial?

MISS R: Most teachers subconsciously assume that these kids can't learn. (Cries of "ridiculous"; "I object", etc.) We teachers fight against this assumption, deny that we have it.

MR. L: In Ocean Hill-Brownsville black kids bused out to East Flatbush were called "unlearnables." This is an example of attitudes throughout the city.

MR. D: In the health ed. department—it's generally accepted that we treat our students equally. Students tend not to think of us as teachers; they talk to us like friends. We get more of that type of relationships. Therefore we're in a better position when a student-teacher confrontation arises. (cross-conversation).

CHAIRMAN: No cross-conversation please. Time is running out.

MRS. G: What approach does a teacher take to avoid antagonism and confrontation? A barrier does exist.

CHAIRMAN: This is important; let's talk about this.

MR. B: Respect for the student is the key, not being "polite."

MRS. T: I resent this kind of psychological approach, generalizing about attitudes. Have you observed me in my class? Suggests that teachers observe one another in class. (Cries of "good idea," etc.)[13]

The faculty workshops were not the only attempts to provide dialogue and understanding at Lane. There were efforts to reach out to the students, expecially to the militants who had been in the forefront of the disruption. One venture in particular was supposed to establish meaningful liaison between students and teachers, and between white and black student leaders. Through the auspices of the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the board's human relations division a special weekend session was planned for March 7–9 for teachers and students to meet in an informal and relaxed atmosphere, away from school. It was hoped that student involvement would help lead to a solution of the racial crisis. Optimistically, school officials had rented a motel in Stony Brook, a quiet suburban community on Long Island, about fifty miles east of the city. It was supposed to be an awakening, an enlightenment, for the eight teachers and thirty-three students who participated. It turned out to be a disaster.

In charge of the trip was Mary Cohen, representing the school administration, with Ed Kissane, the community relations coordinator, attending for the District 19 office. Friday's plenary session reflected a certain uneasiness, a resistance to open up and discuss frankly the factors that had contributed to the school's problems. It soon became evident why. The militants had elected to use the conference as a point of escalation and on Saturday they announced to the rest of the group that there was nothing more to talk about. The time for dialogue had long passed, they insisted, and although they were only eight in number the militants succeeded in swinging the more moderate blacks to their position. Now constituting a majority bloc, the blacks walked out of the session and for the rest of the weekend isolated themselves from the whites, refusing to associate with them. The white youngsters who *were* genuinely concerned, and who had come with open minds willing to listen and to cooperate, found themselves shut off with nobody to talk to.

But the militants weren't satisfied with their sabotage of an honest attempt to open up an avenue of communication between the races and generations. They were going further. Meeting in secrecy they drafted a list of ten demands, which they called nonnegotiable, and presented them to Mary Cohen with an ultimatum that unless the administration met the demands within two weeks there would be hell to pay at Lane on March 24. The demands were not very much different from those which had been drafted and presented to the school board by various citywide student groups (see page 201) such as the High School Student Union—an SDS counterpart, and the Afro-American Students Association. The latter was the group with which Lane's militants were aligned.

There wasn't much for the white students to do that weekend. They were a minority to begin with and now there was only that feeling of helplessness. Several of them felt threatened by the hostile mood created by the militants and they called home. On Saturday evening and Sunday morning a number of white parents made the drive out from the city to take their youngsters home and spare them further psychological abuse.

The actual demands were not brought to the attention of the faculty until March 17, by way of a flyer issued in school by the militants, reiterating their demands and exclaiming: "These demands are non-negotiable and must be met within the two week period exclusive of Monday, March 10, 1969 . . . Monday, March 24 is BLACK MONDAY . . . !!!"

Exactly what was supposed to happen on "Black Monday" remained a secret, but fears and anxiety ran high as the week of March 17 opened. Selub called a faculty conference that day and presented the staff with copies of the demands, asking that they be used as a basis for the discussion. It was unclear to the faculty what the principal's response had been up to that point, and teachers were noticeably concerned about the possiblity of renewed violence on Black Monday. Had the police been notified? Had the superintendent of schools been apprised? Was the mayor's assistance requested? Had the militants been told they would be held responsible for any damage to persons or property? Had the parents of the "leaders" been contacted? What local agencies from the black community were being sought for help? Had the Parents Association been called in? Where was O'Daly and the local school board? Had a timetable of conferences been established for the remainder of the week to try to resolve the issues? What, in short, the teachers wanted to know, was the administration doing to head off another explosion?

Selub had employed the strategy of underplaying the demands and the threat of Black Monday, hoping to avoid publicity and gambling that the pending rebellion would peter out. He held several meetings with the militants during the two-week period but nothing was resolved. If the principal needed any reminder that he was again the man on the spot, a group of black students gave it to him as he opened the faculty conference on March 17. Sticking their heads in from the rear of the auditorium, several students screamed, "You got one more week, Morty!"

The militants distributed some of the most frightening literature during that week prior to Black Monday.

"A MAJORITY OF STUDENTS IN LANE HIGH SCHOOL ARE BLACK," one flyer said, and, "THE ADMINISTRATION IS BULLSHITTING WITH THE EDUCATION OF THE BLACK STUDENTS AT LANE . . . THE TEACHERS ARE TOTALLY RACIST!!!!!"

Flyers showing a coffin entitled "Lane High School" called upon black students to wear black armbands on March 24 to mourn the death of Lane. It was psychological warfare masterfully waged by the architects of disruption. Even if nothing happened on March 24 they had won a stunning victory, outfoxing the administration and causing further polarization.

More than 100 policemen were on duty in and around Lane on Black Monday. They had erected barricades along the 100-yard stretch from Jamaica Avenue, the main street, all along Dexter Court where the student entrance is located. All traffic on the three side-street approaches to the school was blocked off. Black Monday had been given wide publicity in the local press, and the city wasn't taking any chances. But the fear of violence kept most of the 4,300 students home. Robert "Sonny" Carson, former head of Brooklyn CORE, and an adult who had become closely identified with Lane's militants, appeared at the school with his coterie of bearded self-proclaimed revolutionaries and tried to gain entrance into the building.

But the city was determined to prevent violence on this day and Carson was turned back. After registering his vociferous objections he left quietly, followed down Dexter Court by three policemen.

Black Monday had come and passed with no outbursts, no demonstrations, no violence. But the barricades stayed in place for the remainder of the week, and the heavy police guard continued.

It was a day that engendered a fear in the white community that would linger for some time.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Circular from Save Our Schools Committee, Central Brooklyn Anti-Poverty agencies, Jan., 1969.
2. Minutes, Lane UFT Chapter Council, March 5, 1969.
3. Memorandum to Schools Superintendent Bernard Donovan and Executive Deputy Superintendent Nathan Brown from Assistant Superintendent Irving Anker, March 5, 1969.
4. Report of *Citizens Committee for Children*, March 19, 1969.
5. Ruling by Judge Jack B. Weinstein, United States District Court, Brooklyn, May, 1969.
6. Letter to District 19 Superintendent Elizabeth C. O'Daly from Harold Saltzman, May 25, 1969.
7. *Long Island Press*, May 10, 1969.
8. Letter to District 19 UFT chapter chairmen from Superintendent O'Daly, May 13, 1969.
9. *Long Island Press*, "Police in the Schools," by Joseph Alsop, Feb. 3, 1969.
10. *The Jewish Press*, "The Face of Fascism," by Meir Kahane, 1969.
11. Report by Lane Committee of Concerned Teachers, Jan. 22, 1969.
12. Open letter to the Lane faculty from faculty member Jerome Sager, Feb., 1969.
13. Minutes of Lane Faculty Relations Workshop, Bruce Noble, Secretary, Jan. 28, 1969.

Chapter 4

Integration, Racial Strife, and Enter the Community

The turmoil at Lane struck at the very basis of the belief in integration in the public schools. It was widely accepted in New York school circles that an integrated society could only be achieved if children were schooled together regardless of race. But in the midst of all the name-calling and blame-placing, few people remembered that Lane had been the first coeducational academic high school in the entire city to become more than just tokenly integrated—way back in the early 1950s. Sadly, there had been a long history of racial antagonism among the student body and no one had ever made an effort to solve the problems created by integration. For years Lane was something of an orphan of the community. Few, if any, of the community's civic leaders had become involved in the school's life, and there was no broad base of support to sustain the school during a period of storm. Instead, white parents had avoided sending their children to Lane as the black enrollment soared in the 1960s. In 1962, 67.1 percent of the student body was white. In 1969, with the school population upped to more than 5,000, the white enrollment had declined to 30.7 percent (see Appendix A). A variety of conditons had brought on the sudden change. While the New York City school board was publicly committed to a program of integration in the early 1960s, there were no significant efforts to integrate the high schools or to prevent already integrated schools from tipping over and becoming all black. Various artificial devices were introduced to break the neighborhood school concept, which, because of segregated housing patterns, fostered de facto segregation. One such change was the abandonment of the traditional 6–3–3 (elementary–junior high school–senior high school) arrangement and replacing it with a new 4–4–4 setup which allowed the school board to manipulate large numbers of students for the sake of integration. For Lane it meant the doubling of the size of the incoming class as the ninth grade was lopped off the junior high schools.

Another reason for the rather rapid increase over a relatively short time span was the new accent on vocational education. Black youths who had not learned to master the most fundamental skills in the early grades were, for the most part, unable to compete in the academic high schools, which by nature were geared to prepare students for college. In 1962 Lane was still a fine academic school, its graduating class able to compete with most for state regents scholarships and merit awards. Meanwhile, the twenty-eight vocational high schools had become, literally, dumping grounds, where academically retarded and disoriented blacks could go if they failed to meet the minimum reading grade level required for admission to the academic schools. For most black youngsters the vocational school experience was only a waiting period, a place to hang around until he reached the age of sixteen when, with his parent's consent and a job, he could leave school.

But in the late 1950s the supporters of vocational education began to marshal their forces to win a reversal of this trend, which had all but destroyed the trade schools. And the school board, anxious to get more blacks into academic high schools, agreed to allow the trade schools selectivity in choosing students. Soon the vocational schools were giving their own entrance examinations, barring students who hadn't acquired the competency level they felt was necessary to handle the type of technical training they offered. By the early 1960s the academic high schools began feeling the impact of that policy shift as *they* were forced to take in those students, mostly black, who were rejected by the vocational schools and who were also totally unprepared to achieve in an academic college-bound course of study. These were the students who started entering Lane in ever-increasing numbers in the early 1960s. The school was unprepared to meet their needs, and they all too soon became alienated from it. Placed in a "general" or non-college preparatory course of study, they had little extrinsic motive to succeed.

Nor was the school board especially concerned with the severe overcrowding created by these shifts. Coupled with the general population rise, schools like Lane nearly doubled in size during the decade of the sixties. Meanwhile, the city's school construction program lagged well behind the rise in high school enrollment. During this period of growing registration, only two new academic high schools were built in the entire borough of Brooklyn, while one (Girls High School) was actually closed down. Not a single new high school was built in the core area of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, and East New York. Sharp increases in student populations forced the high schools to go on to overlapping or multiple sessions, beginning frequently before sunrise and running until 5:00 or 6:00 P.M. with students and teachers coming and going in shifts. By 1969 schools that had been built for 3,000 students were carrying registers of 4,500 and more. In 1968, of the seventeen academic high schools in Brooklyn, only *one* was operating below capacity while the rest were overutilized at rates from 116 percent to to 166 percent. During this period Lane's enrollment jumped from 3,650 students in 1958 to 5,374 in 1968.

At the same time the school board never did implement an integration program for the high schools on a boroughwide basis. Yes, Lane could be integrated; there had been little opposition to it as far back as any one could remember. But it was a different story for the schools in most other parts of Brooklyn. Even in 1968 most were either only tokenly integrated or almost exclusively white as a result of segregated housing patterns (see Appendix B). Even the board's Open Enrollment Program, allowing ghetto blacks to choose to go to all-white schools outside their own zone, did little to further integration.

Not only did the school board do little to integrate white schools or to build new high schools in the black areas, but its zoning plans had the effect of creating reverse segregation in schools such as Lane which were *already well integrated*. By gerrymandering Lane's zone and extending it further and further into the Central Brooklyn ghetto, more blacks were added to the school's rolls each year. While there was a rather complete population change in the core of East New York during the 1960s, the immediate neighborhoods of Cypress Hills and Woodhaven remained exclusively white. Nevertheless, the local high school became predominantly black. In making these zoning changes the school board never admitted that it was politically impossible to bus large numbers of black youngsters to all-white schools. At the same time it followed a policy of *not* building new high schools in Central Brooklyn, the core area which in 1969 was home for most of the borough's 650,000 blacks. The excuse was that the whites would never send their children to a school located in a black community. The path of least resistance, and the one ultimately adopted by the high school zoning unit, was to transport into Lane more black youngsters and turn an already integrated school into a segregated one. Such was the disregard with which Lane was treated by central school authorities during the 1960s.*

James J. O'Connell, Lane's new principal, saw the handwriting on the wall as the white population dipped from 67.1 percent in 1962 to 45.2 percent in 1966. Along with the UFT chapter chairman, Carl Golden, he attempted to get a reversal of the trend. O'Connell appealed directly to the school board's central zoning unit, enlisted the support of his immediate superior,

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*On April 12, 1972, as a result of a suit filed in Federal District Court, Brooklyn, by six Lane parents, Judge John R. Dooling ruled that the zoning of Lane High School resulted in de jure segregation. The court is expected soon to order the Board of Education to draw a new attendance zone for the school.

Dorothy Bonowit—the Queens high schools superintendent—and worked cooperatively with Golden. But when push came to shove, O'Connell backed off. He was still on probation in 1965 and he wasn't about to make a lot of noise in an open fight with those who could determine whether or not he would be granted tenure in his new rank. Faced with the choice of rocking the boat and incurring the wrath of his superiors (risking the denial of tenure, at worst—at best being ostracized as a maverick), O'Connell backed off. The struggle to preserve integration at Lane was lost in 1965 after a half-hearted fight. There had been meetings with zoning head Jacob Landers, Golden, O'Connell, and Bonowit, but they resulted in little more than promises which were never kept by the zoning people. The very transportation routes laid out by Golden were used, instead, in 1965, to relieve another school (George Wingate High School) which was able to mount more community and faculty pressure for a zoning change.

The racial strife of 1969 was the logical culmination of eight years of reckless zoning by the central board. As early as 1965 the local UFT chapter issued a detailed analysis entitled, "STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE AND NATURE OF COMPLAINT," focusing on the school board's discriminatory zoning against Lane. In this comprehensive study Golden pointed out that quality integrated education had been a goal best exemplified by Lane for many years. It noted that the school was ideally located to maintain integration and prevent an exodus of whites from the school system and the city. The paper appealed to the board to enable the school to provide an environment in which "racial enmity could be minimized and diminished, and mutual respect encouraged and increased." The study predicted in 1965 that the city's zoning policy would turn Lane into a segregated school. It noted, too, that while the nonwhite population of Lane had already exceeded the 50 percent mark, the four other senior high schools closest to Lane in each direction had nonwhite enrollments of only 33 percent, 4.5 percent, 22 percent, and 16.8 percent.

"These figures clearly indicate," the study charged, "that Lane alone amongst its immediate neighbors has become, and will remain, a segregated school as defined by Commissioner James E. Allen [New York State commissioner of education]."

The paper went on to show that transportation and space could not be used as excuses to justify the mass influx of blacks into the school. Public transportation facilities were available with no increase in travel time to other nonintegrated schools. It was also noted that none of Lane's neighboring schools were being utilized to their fullest capacity according to the board's own figures.

The move toward reverse segregation had resulted in a serious decrease in the level of educational opportunity available at Lane. The study revealed that the science curriculum had suffered as classes in physics and chemistry were dropped. The modern language curriculum was truncated by the elimination of German, Latin, Hebrew, and Russian. For the first time there were no honor classes at each level of English and social studies as had existed in all the years prior to 1965. The number of new members inducted into Arista, the honor society, had dropped from the usual sixty or more each year, to less than thirty. The local superintendent had even directed O'Connell to drop a number of special courses because of low registration. White students began using this lack of educational opportunity as a convenient means of getting a transfer to a nearby school which did offer subjects that Lane had dropped for lack of academic talent. This reduced educational program was in direct contradiction to the concept of quality integrated education which the school board was publicly expounding.

The sudden and dramatic shift of student population had also led to a decline in extracurricular activities. There were fewer clubs, and even a victorious basketball team found it difficult to sell tickets. Once-popular attractions like the senior dance and the senior-faculty basketball game no longer drew crowds, and as a result of student drunkenness and racial clashes practically all evening social activities were discontinued. Students stopped participating as readily in student government and there was general apathy toward extracurricular activities. Parents told their children to come home right after school as it was becoming dangerous to remain after

3:00 P.M. because of the increasing number of fights. As a consequence, the enriching extracurricular activities were quickly disappearing, making it impossible for either black or white students to enjoy opportunities available to almost every other high school student.

The dream of integration was turning into a nightmare. Lane was the safety valve, putting off real integration in the high schools of Brooklyn. In 1968 Commissioner Allen's office responded to the UFT chapter's allegation that the board's zoning policy had segregated Lane. The State Education Department wrote:

> In investigating the situation of Franklin K. Lane I find that it is essentially as you report. However, I am sure that this is temporary. There is presently a thorough study of the entire Brooklyn zoning in progress. Franklin K. Lane will be included in this study as will all of the high schools in Brooklyn. This state financed study is in operation presently and the results of it will be known in November of 1968.[1]

The results of that study *were* known in 1968 but there was no comprehensive boroughwide rezoning. In May, 1969, after a local protest forced the board to back off from a general rezoning plan, there was an interim move to shift 2,200 black and Puerto Rican students into ten predominantly white schools to alleviate the racial imbalance in four others, one of which was Lane. The plan drew a loud howl from John Lindsay, and the mayor publicly criticized the board for daring to zone black youngsters into white schools. It was an election year, and how, the mayor thought, could he let the school officials put him in such an embarrassing position when he was actively campaigning to win back those white middle-class votes he had lost when he sided with the Ocean Hill extremists in the Great School Strike.

The *New York Times,* which usually supported Lindsay on controversial issues, was critical of the mayor's protest, and on its editorial page, said:

> Inasmuch as only slightly more than 2% of Brooklyn's academic high school students are affected, it is difficult to understand why Mr. Lindsay considers that the measure requires policy review either by

> the Board of Education itself or by City Hall. Indeed, the suggestion that the Mayor's office should be involved in such changes, which can never be expected to please all students, parents, or principals affected, can only increase the risk of politicizing what ought to be a strictly educational administrative decision. Mr. Lindsay's reaction, whether he realized it or not, is certain to be cheered by those least enthusiastic about integration . . .[2]

And retiring Schools Superintendent Donovan chimed in with: "I do not think we deserve any condemnation from the Mayor if he is as devoted to integration in the schools as we are. If the Mayor doesn't share our goal, then he should say so publicly."[3]

The temporary and modest change was to result in about 300 fewer black students enrolling in Lane in September, 1969. A key factor in the board's move was the increasing pressure from community groups protesting the growing racial imbalance. The UFT chapter at Lane, the Parents Association, and the newly formed Woodhaven-Cypress Hills Community Association had all taken firm public stands on the issue of racial balance. All three groups had come out strongly in favor of the concept of restoring Lane to the status of an interborough school, serving white students from Queens on an equal basis with the blacks from Brooklyn. But even there, the forces within the body politic, and the educational bureaucracy itself, were stacked against any such change. The issue of race had become so explosive that public officials, even the local politicians, avoided the Lane issue like the plague.

In May the mayor reneged on commitments about rezoning given by his own representative, J. David Love. The board had first published a preliminary rezoning plan in March, 1969, which, if adopted, would have cut off the small remaining portion of Queens from the Lane zone, sealing forever the school's fate as a segregated institution. Only a leak by one of the local superintendents in Brooklyn, revealing that the plan would bus out students from his all-white district into a predominantly black high school (Thomas Jefferson High School) resulted in a white reaction which forced the board to kill the plan. It had been released to the district superintendents as a confidential document, but the outcry against the busing killed any general rezoning for 1969.

There weren't many people around that spring who were willing to talk about integration and rezoning for Lane or any other school in New York. Six months earlier Selub had said:

> I feel rezoning Lane is adviseable, but just how it should be done I don't know. . . . I think the teachers are right when they say the racial balance should be restored. The school is becoming tipped over and that isn't good for anybody. The ethnic balance in the school doesn't reflect the school neighborhood in any way. . . . I would think that the proportion [of nonwhites] should be closer to 50% and arranged so that it wouldn't tip over. That way we could provide for the needs of everybody."[4]

Privately, Selub, and almost everybody else close to the Lane situation, conceded that the only way it could be done was to shorten the Brooklyn side of the district while extending it deeper into Queens. But zoning itself was a highly political issue and it was for this reason that the Woodhaven assemblyman, Frederick Schmidt, broke with the Community Association. The association's plan, supported by parents and teachers, called for pushing the lines deeper into Queens and extending them into Ozone Park, a community which was also part of Schmidt's 29th Assembly District. It didn't take a political genius to realize that the people of that area would oppose such a plan and that it was political suicide for an elected official to be anything but unequivocally opposed to such heresy. When the chips were down, the assemblyman abandoned Woodhaven and jumped on the bandwagon with the rest of the Queens County Democrats who were attacking the proposal. It killed any hope of reviving Lane as an interborough and integrated school.

Fred Schmidt wasn't the only local politician to abandon Lane. For years the school had gotten its very best students, those who were admitted to the honors program, from the Forest Park Housing Cooperative in Woodhaven, a complex of apartment buildings. But when the trouble began in the fall of 1968, the parents of these youngsters united in a concerted effort to get their children transferred out of Lane. Nobody could blame them. Their children came home each day with macabre stories of white girls being attacked by black girls, of extortions, of the fear of entering the study hall in the auditorium or of going into a lavatory for what might be lurking there. These parents had developed real prejudices, a reaction which was in direct contradiction to the liberal traditions of their Jewish heritage. But, they argued, the safety of their children comes first.

It was not at all unusual, then, that the parents in the middle-income housing cooperative enlisted the help of their city councilman, Arthur Katzman of Forest Hills (the first city Democrat to endorse Lindsay's reelection bid a few months later). They wanted Katzman, an avowed liberal, to get their housing unit zoned out of Lane's district and into the more severely overcrowded Richmond Hill High School located about two miles farther east. Richmond Hill was a quiet local school which in 1969 remained rather isolated from even the general movement of student unrest. But what was most important for these Woodhaven parents was the fact that in spite of severe overcrowding, the black minority in the Richmond Hill school had not created the furor that was sweeping Lane. Katzman discussed the matter of rezoning with Richard Streiter, the mayor's education aide, who communicated with Deputy Superintendent Brown. *That* zoning change *was* made, and Lane was moved a little closer toward becoming an all-black school.

The Community Association's own rezoning plan was given wide publicity throughout eastern Brooklyn and southwestern Queens with some 50,000 copies of the proposed zoning changes distributed. The goal of changing the lines to achieve integration was one which had the endorsement of most local groups, and although the teachers were somewhat suspicious of the association's politics, they did support the rezoning idea. The association's leaders asked me to attend a zoning meeting they had set up with Nathan Brown at board headquarters. The conference had just gotten under way when I arrived at the deputy's office. Assembled around the large conference table were Brown, zoning director Hillary Thorne, Assistant Superintendent Frederick Williams, and the association leaders. The fact that both Thorne and Williams were black further aroused the suspicions of the association leaders: William Hoffman of Lane, Michael Long and Joseph Galliani of Cypress Hills, and Tony Sadowski of Woodhaven.

As the secretary showed me to a seat and announced my presence, Brown looked up and asked, "Are you the Mr. Saltzman from the UFT?"

"I am," came the reply.

Mike Long quickly interjected, explaining that he had asked me to be present in an advisory capacity.

"I'm sorry, but I don't meet with teachers and community people in the same meeting," Brown replied, obviously annoyed at my presence. "If Mr. Saltzman wants to meet with me on this matter I am always happy to meet with teachers. But he has no business here today."

It was a closed case.

Knowing Brown's reputation, and not wanting the meeting to break up, I rose to leave. Galliani, the most vituperative of the association leaders, had some choice words for Brown and followed me out as a gesture of protest—hoping that the others would follow suit. They didn't, and after Galliani had cooled off he returned to the conference. The deputy superintendent, however, was less concerned about resolving the issue of Lane's zone than he was about sizing up the association. He had read newspaper accounts of meetings where nearly a thousand local residents had shown up to cry for the principal's head, and he knew, too, of their successful demonstrations outside the school and of their political expertise in rallying large numbers of people to their cause. But Brown had the same feeling of contempt for the association that he had for the city's black militants who had taken over schools by force and had even once held him captive in his own office. To Brown, the Community Association represented a white backlash, certainly a force to be reckoned with and not to be taken lightly. The meeting itself accomplished little, with each side accusing the other of stimulating unrest at the school. They were on different wavelengths.

The UFT chapter was quick to take Brown up on his offer to meet and requested such an audience. Brown responded by having Selub set up a luncheon meeting in the principal's office on April 22. Altomare and I spoke in behalf of the six-member teachers committee we had assembled.

The school had been on a single-session schedule since February, we reminded the deputy superintendent, and we had endured what no other school had been through . . . both qualitatively and quantitatively. Give us a chance to recover, time for wounds to heal, we pleaded. Keep the incoming freshman and sophomore classes down to about 800 pupils in the fall. Let the school get back on its feet. At least with the maintenance of a 4,300 student body and a single-session day we could begin to solve our problems. Moreover, if the incoming class was kept down to 800, that would also assure an eventual return to a fifty-fifty black to white ratio and help restore local confidence among whites that their children weren't going to be outcasts in a black school. We had all the statistics ready for Brown; feeder patterns, the size of the junior high school graduating classes, maps, and transportation guides. We had done our homework well. How could he refuse us? Surely, our arguments were responsible, our goal legitimate.

But Brown had come to Lane not to save a school, but only out of the necessity of fulfilling a commitment made out of expedience. Cynically, he suggested a plan to reduce by 100 the number of black youngsters coming in from the Brooklyn side and to add 100 whites from Ozone Park, with a contingency that the white parents consent to go along with the shift. They would never approve such a plan, we argued, if given the option. And the minimal number of students involved would have no immediate affect on the school either. It would hardly alter the balance, wouldn't reduce overcrowding, and would not facilitate the maintenance of the single session we needed. It was simply too little, too late, we protested.

Nathan Brown's announcement of the proposed zoning shift went even further into Queens than the Community Association had requested. And it came right in the midst of the Democratic party's primary campaign for Queens borough president, a wide-open affair. In a borough where the Democratic enrollment was two and one-half times that of the Republicans, a victory in the Democratic primary virtually guaranteed victory in the general election. On the eve of such an important county election, the three major candidates seized upon the zoning question and came out in vehement opposition to any such shifts. An emergency meeting had been called by civic and political leaders of the Ozone Park–Howard Beach neighborhood to protest Brown's proposal of zoning their youngsters into Lane. Present at the meeting were the three major Democratic hopefuls for the borough presidency: State Assemblyman Leonard Stavisky, State Senator John Santucci, and incumbent (interim) Sidney Leviss. All three spoke out against the change and in favor of retaining John Adams as the neighborhood school for that area. Joining in the public protest and pledging their support in the fight against the rezoning were City Councilman Walter Ward of Howard Beach and Woodhaven's own assemblyman, Fred Schmidt.

The 18,000 petitions submitted to Brown from the residents of Woodhaven and Cypress Hills was not nearly enough to match the pressure that was being mounted from nearby Ozone Park. A potent coalition of parents, politicians, and civic groups came together to blast the proposal and muster opposition to it. There was little anybody could do or say that could lessen local hostility as they held rallies and mobilized community antagonism against the plan. Emotions were running too high. Even Tom Pappas, the UFT chapter chairman of John Adams High School, was dragged into the fray, warning of internal union division if the Lane chapter continued to push for a rezoning that affected his school. Soon Brown began stepping back, and in response to a Lane chapter telegram endorsing his plan, the deputy superintendent wrote:

> May I point out to you, however, that the parents of the children concerned have mounted a very strong campaign in opposition to this proposal. If the mail, telephone calls, and other public meetings taking place are any indication, it seems to me that the community groups which indicated support for such a zoning plan either do not have children in the public schools or do not speak for the majority of the community.[5]

On May 19, 1969, after Brown decided to drop the plan entirely—less than three weeks after proposing it—he wrote to the president of the District 27 local school board, declaring: "Since the parents involved are not receptive to the change we have decided to withdraw the proposal. It was never our intent to force any zoning decisions on the community."[6]

While the zoning question remained cloudy, a great many of the truants who had been transferred out in January returned, and more could be expected back in the fall. Another 1,300 new students would be added to the rolls and almost 1,000 more would be taken in on transfers from vocational schools or as new residents in the Lane district. The register would again soar to 5,400 with no solutions to the problems that had caused the breakdown the term before. This, along with the presence of an astute, politically aware, and separatist oriented cadre of militants, set the stage for a reenactment of the previous fall's disruption.

The struggle for integration was being lost, and many were beginning to lose faith that it could ever be won. Perhaps Mary Cohen, a lifetime integrationist, put it best at a November 3 conference with the UFT and High School Superintendent Jacob Zack. Facetiously, she suggested that if the board was unprepared to move to make Lane viable, then the school should be taken apart, brick by brick, and rebuilt in Bedford-Stuyvesant. It was her contention that at least with an all-black student body there would be no racial clashes and the school would be insulated by the local black community.

The Community

Morton Selub was a youngish forty-eight years of age when he assumed the principalship of Lane High School in the fall of 1967. Since 1961 he had been the chairman of the English Department at Martin Van Buren High School, a school located in a very affluent residential neighborhood of eastern Queens. In 1966 its black enrollment was 10.2 percent (mostly middle class), giving Selub little recent experience in dealing with the kind of student he would come in contact with at Lane. Bearing a startling resemblance to comedian Danny Kaye, Selub even had the entertainer's sharp wit and sense of humor. Wearing flowered ties and plaid sports jackets, he was anything but the stereotyped high school principal. An outgoing, pleasant, likable sort of a guy, he had a ready smile and friendly word for everyone with whom he came in contact. At his premier address to the Parents Association in 1967 he said, almost jokingly: "People ask me why I chose to come to Lane when I could have been appointed principal of a nice quiet school in Staten Island. My answer is, because this is where the action is." How many times, over the next three years, would he regret having made that decision?

The son of a pharmacist, Selub attended public schools in the Jewish community of Brooklyn where he was born. After graduating from high school in 1935 he began his college studies at night at New York University while holding down an assortment of jobs during the day. In World War II he was a first lieutenant in the Air Corps and saw action in the Mediterranean theater. After the war he began his teaching career in the city's public schools.

But in 1967 Morton Selub came to a troubled school that was crying out for vigorous and dynamic leadership, for imaginative and creative direction. It needed, above everything else, a wise and time-tested administrator who knew the pitfalls in dealing with the school system bureaucrats. For all his charm and wit, Morton Selub,—nontenured and insecure in his new post—was exactly what Lane did not need in 1967.

There was a job to do in 1967 if the school was to be saved. The Parents Association, once a supportive and active organization, had steadily declined in both membership and stature in the 1960s as the composition of the student body changed. Each year fewer parents from the local community joined as the number of white youngsters attending Lane decreased. As the school became less a part of the community's life there was little incentive for local parents to get involved. At the same time the parents of the black students, living in the outlying areas, had neither the time nor the inclination to travel to Lane for an evening meeting of the Parents Association. Anyway, it wasn't *their* community. And just as their children felt embittered each day about making the reluctant trek into what they sensed was hostile territory, so did the parents refrain from any active involvement with the school. Even on Open School Night, Lane was not a place a very great many black parents visited. So it was that the Parents Association became a paper organization, its total membership down to 117 by 1969 with rarely more than 25 parents showing up for the monthly meetings. It was far cry from the 500–600 active membership it had known just a few short years before. There was no concerted effort by the administration to build up the dying organization, and the only real drive to save it came from the UFT chapter, which in the fall of 1967 tried to spearhead a membership campaign. It met with little or no success. When the school found itself in the throes of the worst disruption in its history, there was no influential parent group to give it sustenance or help bring about a detente between the warring blacks and panic-stricken whites. Only after two months of violence, when the UFT chapter distributed a bristling letter on Open School Night, were the parents even apprised of the hazardous conditions in the school.

If Selub missed the boat with the parents, groups of whom were later to descend upon him demanding that their children be protected or transferred out, he was a total failure in the eyes of the local community. In the end he would find himself alone, challenged by both the immediate white community and the blacks. Just as he had chosen not to weld a close alliance with the parents' group, he rejected the notion of establishing close ties with the neighborhood. To the progressive and very liberally oriented principal, the Woodhaven and Cypress Hills communities represented the polar right. Exclusively white, their population of German, Irish, and Italian descent was decidedly conservative. A. Frederick Meyerson, the Democratic-Liberal state senator whose East Brooklyn polyglot district takes in Cypress Hills, had once observed at a meeting of local chapter chairmen visiting him in Albany (the state capital), that the people of Cypress Hills harbored some of the most intolerable reactionary views in the entire city.

Even though Cypress Hills had been the home base of Anthony Travia, the forward-looking Democratic speaker of the State Assembly from 1965 to 1968, the reactionary label was firmly imprinted on the community. Travia, a veteran of twenty-one years in the assembly, had also avoided getting involved in Lane's problems. He resigned his assembly seat in 1968 to accept a federal judgeship and was succeeded by Vito Battista, a Republican-Conservative, who after years of campaigning for various state and city offices, finally won an elective post. But Battista, with an eye toward the 1969 mayoral race in New York, refrained from any active involvement in the drama unfolding at Lane.

Even in the early 1960s, when the school's zone was being gerrymandered to bring in more blacks from Central Brooklyn, there was no audible voice of protest in the community. All the local politicians, realizing they needed a broad base of support in a general geographic area that was becoming increasingly nonwhite, skirted the issue of Lane. Fearful of alienating the black communities of East New York and Bushwick, they left the school bureaucrats with an open field to exercise the deathblow. The neighborhood residents, leaderless, and ignorant of the changes being manipulated by the school board, could do nothing to hold back the deluge.

Selub had assumed the principalship of Lane on the eve of a tremendous citywide struggle over the question of decentralizing the city's 947 public schools. At issue was the question of how much real control neighborhoods should have over their local schools and the amount of authority exercised over them by the central Board of Education. The mayor had commissioned McGeorge Bundy, head of the multimillion-dollar Ford Foundation and former adviser to President Kennedy, to do a comprehensive study of the public school system and come up with a plan to decentralize its massive bureaucracy. But the Bundy Report, released in November, 1967, shook the very foundations of the school system, striking fear into the hearts of its 60,000 professional employees. It called for breaking up the central authority and replacing it with thirty to sixty fully autonomous local community boards. The hiring and firing of teachers, signing of union contracts, disciplining of staff, and promotions to supervisory rank were all powers Bundy suggested be removed from the central authority and given over to new locally elected school boards. In a city where 93 percent of the pedagogical staff were white and 51 percent of the public school students black and Puerto Rican, and where the Bundy-Lindsay aristocrats were pitting the lower and middle classes against each other, the concept of "community control" of the schools was a most serious threat to the job security of teachers and to the union which exercised the power in their behalf.

It was against this backdrop that the struggle was waged in Ocean Hill-Brownsville in 1968. Never was the real issue the job rights of the nineteen teachers who were summarily dismissed (the union had agreed behind the scenes, before the firings, to permit the quiet easing out of teachers the local board didn't want), but rather about the kind of decentralization bill the legislature would eventually pass.

While most school administrators, for reasons of self-preservation, sought to establish closer ties with the communities in which they worked, Selub moved in the exact opposite direction during that hectic 1967–69 period. The new principal never made an effort to build a bridge between the school and the local community. Finding the conservative flavor of the Woodhaven and Cypress Hills neighborhoods distasteful, he used it as a convenient rationalization to remain aloof from them. Even in the early days when Lane was more of a neighborhood school, there had always been a certain standoffishness between the school and local community, and Selub was by no means the first Lane principal to isolate the school from the neighborhood. In a sense the school was always a bit too left for the neighborhood, the neighborhood a little too right for the school. With two opposing sociopolitical orientations the barrier was never breached.

Selub, meanwhile, remained something of a mystery to the community, and it was not at all unusual that they later turned on him, placing on his shoulders the entire blame for the breakdown. He almost never visited a civic or fraternal group in either Woodhaven or Cypress Hills. Except for the infrequent meetings of a school-community council (an advisory group of local clergymen and parent and civic leaders), Selub chose to conduct his business exclusively from his first-floor office perched atop the Dexter Court hill overlooking the area. Rarely did he return to the community in the evening or on a weekend to attend a civic meeting, a bazaar, or some other local affair which brought together large numbers of local residents and community leaders. Rejecting the white community, neither did he make any overt gestures of friendship to the black neighborhoods. He had been equally inaccessible and aloof from both, and both demanded his removal when the explosion came. The principal who had hidden himself from the masses, and the masses who had voluntarily disassociated themselves from the school, clashed bitterly when the horrors of Lane were unveiled early in 1969.

If the school administration, even before Selub's arrival, had failed to involve the community in Lane's affairs, there was another side to the coin. Tragically, none of the established civic groups in either Woodhaven or Cypress Hills had made the Lane problem a chief organizational concern. The first inklings of trouble appeared way back in 1965 and during the five-year fall there was no movement in the community to come to the school's assistance. With the established groups abstaining, and there were many, and with the parents and local residents crying out for help, there was a leadership vacuum. It was in that atmosphere that the Woodhaven–Cypress Hills Community Association was born, a militant organization emerging out of anger and fear created by the racial strife. Its leadership sounded the call and an agitated community responded. It was the very first time that a local association had come together for the expressed purpose of finding solutions to the school crisis.

Anchoring the new association, which had its organizational drive in late December, 1968, and early January, 1969, was a Lane social studies teacher, William Hoffman. It was only his second year at the school, but unlike most other teachers he recognized the need for strong teacher-community cooperation. Strategically inclined, he viewed the battle as one which had to be fought with the same weapons employed by the black militants: demonstrations, confrontation, coercion. Hoffman believed that the school board, and Selub, wouldn't move against the Lane disrupters or initiate any zoning change unless there was a countervailing force exerting pressure with equal intensity from the other end of the political spectrum. He served as the association's "inside man," supplying information and suggesting tactics to the other four members of the executive committee.

Joining Hoffman as the one-two punch of the association was Michael Long, a thirty-year-old Conservative party district leader from Cypress Hills. Tall, blonde, and extremely good looking, Long had a charisma that attracted a large following. A dynamic speaker, fiery and dramatic, and claiming to be totally devoted to the salvation of Lane, he became the group's chief spokesman.

The third member of the executive committee was Joe Galliani, a youth worker and grass-roots Cypress Hills politico who ran the 38th Assembly District's Independent Club. Highly charged and vitriolic, Galliani gave the group a bombastic tone that often threatened to spill over into violence.

With Hoffman school-based, and Long and Galliani rallying the forces in Cypress Hills, it was essential to balance the leadership with Woodhaven representation since a major issue was the fight for a general rezoning that would restore the school to its interborough status. Walter Donovan became the fourth member of the leadership. An attorney and a Woodhaven resident, he had run unsuccessfully as the Republican candidate (against Schmidt) for that Queens assembly seat in 1968. He gave the assocation the political and geographic balance it needed. From the very beginning, Woodhaven Assemblyman Fred Schmidt, a Democrat, was fearful of the new group. Never forgetting political realities, he saw it as a possible power base that could be used in a campaign against him. Donovan's involvement with it intensified that concern. Schmidt was the darling of Woodhaven, and had behind him most of the established civic groups, including the Woodhaven Interfaith Council, a committee of local clergymen with a strong liberal point of view. In 1965 a smear campaign, totally unfounded, had been waged against him by political opponents, and the assemblyman was forever wary of moving too far right . . . giving his enemies ammunition to use against him. Schmidt's close identification with the Interfaith Council gave him the liberal balance he needed to answer his critics and he could ill afford to alienate the church group by throwing in with the conservative association. But even more important was his anticipation of their program to push the Lane zone further to the south and east to draw white students from Ozone Park, part of his own 29th Assembly District.

While Schmidt was fearful of the association, the Woodhaven Democrats realized the potential appeal and political clout of the new bicounty association. In just two weeks it had enrolled more than 500 dues-paying members and there was no telling how high or in what direction it would go. Lane itself was becoming more of a political issue in Woodhaven. The racial unrest at the school was a contributing factor in keeping young people from moving into the residential middle-class neighborhood where the local high school was considered a community menace.

Ever since his election to the New York State Assembly in 1964, Schmidt had avoided the Lane issue, realizing that the ultimate solution of rezoning had to hurt him politically. Complicating the situation for him was the fact that there were some residents who wanted all of Woodhaven zoned out of the Lane district and into the high schools serving the adjacent communities of Richmond Hill and Ozone Park. It didn't matter to them that those schools were more severely overcrowded than Lane, with both having annexes to house the overflow. The only important consideration was the fact that they were predominantly white schools, free of racial violence. Originally, the Queens Conservative party had broken with Long on this issue, advocating the removal of all Woodhaven youngsters from Lane. But other Queens County legislators, four key assemblymen—John Flack of Glendale, Rosemary Gunning of Ridgewood, Joseph Kunzeman of Queens Village, and Alfred Lerner of Richmond Hill—all Republicans elected with Conservative support, had made the neighborhood school notion a key issue in their political campaigns. If Lane was the neighborhood school for Woodhaven, it just didn't jibe to move its youngsters to schools in other communities. The Queens Conservative organization quickly changed its stance.

The overwhelming majority of Woodhaven parents and residents were tired of running, fearful of drops in realty prices, concerned that Woodhaven was becoming a community of elderly people as its young left, and angry over repeated acts of vandalism by black youths who swarmed their streets turning over garbage cans and defacing property. The residents of Woodhaven wholeheartedly endorsed the proposal to cut off the Brooklyn boundary about two miles to the west, thus eliminating the Brownsville and Bedford-Stuyvesant sections from the district. Coupled with a moderate extension into Queens, this could return the school to a racial profile that would be about 60 percent white. It was also expected that as the profile changed from the rezoning, local residents would not feel the need to send their children to parochial and private schools as a means of avoiding Lane. It was hoped that in time, as conditions at Lane improved, more neighborhood youngsters would come to Lane. Every year hundreds of neighborhood whites found some alternative to Lane: a private or parochial school, a nonzoned vocational or technical public high school, some even used the address of a friend or relative to register their child in a nearby academic high school . . . anything but the local school! With a rezoning, residents hoped, this white exodus from the school and community would stop. They were to be sorely disappointed.

The Woodhaven Democrats understood all too well that they could get caught with their pants down, and it was for this reason that Tony Sadowski, Woodhaven's Democratic district leader, got into the act and became the fifth member of the executive committee of the fledgling community association. Sadowski wasn't about to let Donovan steal the show for the Republicans. He went along with almost everything proposed by the Cypress Hills leaders in terms of organizational policy, but when he was unable to prevent them from adopting the plan of extending the district lines into Ozone Park, Sadowski broke with the group. Although Schmidt had never thrown in with it, he did come to the very first meeting of the association on January 10, 1969, and told the crowd of over 500 people: "We can't tolerate fear in the school or fear on the street. This is America, and what's going on shouldn't happen."[7]

But at that very first meeting it was Mike Long who provided the two fundamental themes that would become the basis for the organization's program. "The first thing that has to be done is to get a change in leadership," he said. "In addition to attacks made against teachers and students women are afraid to walk out on the streets because of students who loiter in the area." Mike Long wasn't one to mince words. He went on to talk about the question of rezoning. Without going into the details of what was later proposed for Lane, he asked the assemblage to put the pressure on local assemblymen Schmidt and Battista "to go back to Albany and bring back the neighborhood school. They should go to Albany and demand the end to busing. Albany has to tell Lindsay, we've had it."[8]

In 1969 the New York State Legislature did indeed pass an anti-busing law which prevented the state education commissioner and nonelected school boards from ordering the busing of students for the purpose of achieving racial balance. This was the law cited less than a year later by Mississippi Senator John Stennis in his campaign to compel the United States Justice Department to apply the same standards of integration to Northern schools as were being applied to those in the South. But the new state law brought no relief for Lane. The no-busing law, which was later thrown out by the courts, was not applicable as a solution to Lane's problems.*

The first meeting of the Woodhaven–Cypress Community Association was a grand success, and the leadership, encouraged by the enthusiasm of its newfound following, scheduled another meeting for the following week. It flooded the neighborhood with flyers announcing the second session on January 17.

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*In 1972 the New York State Legislature passed another anti-busing bill. In vetoing the measure, Governor Rockefeller averred that it was substantially the same as the 1969 law that had been declared unconstitutional.

The Lane chapter council, while privately excited about the formation of a new community group that would stand up for the school, was nevertheless wary of forming an alliance with it. Long's insinuation that Selub be replaced worried a number of council members. Some feared that if Selub was dumped the board would assign a black principal as it had done recently at Boys High School and Thomas Jefferson, two predominantly black schools that were having racial problems. Others, while being quite willing to blame Selub for his inaction, were not ready to call for his removal. Still others, of liberal leanings, pictured the new group as a right-wing extreme with which the union must never ally. The council split between those favoring open alliance and those wanting repudiation of the association. There was no choice but to follow a middle course to avoid internal council feuding.

It was a well-known fact that the New York City school board didn't act unless put to the wall and forced to make changes to avoid some pending catastrophe. And even then it could always be expected to do what was expedient rather than act with integrity and conscience. A leaderless and apathetic community was the board's signal to gerrymander the Lane zone and increase its nonwhite population from 32.9 percent in 1962 to 54.8 percent in 1966, and 69.3 percent in 1969. Had there been a school-community relationship at any time over that seven-year period, or had there been any kind of community leadership willing to stand up to the irresponsible zoning shifts, it is inconceivable that the school could have deteriorated as it did. There were those who called the new Community Association bigoted because it talked about the neighborhood school, and yet in 1969 all but a handful of state legislators voted for the anti-busing bill, which was itself a reaction to integration.

The hypocrisy was glaring.

In 1967, under pressure from the state education department, the school board had created a number of *skip zones*, and redistricted several thousand black youngsters from the deteriorating sections of southeastern Queens to the distant middle-class white schools of the central and northeastern sections of the borough. But as the lawlessness in these schools rose in direct proportion to the increase in its bused-in students, outcries against the busing began resounding through the borough as calendar year 1970 opened. Schools such as Van Buren, John Bowne, Bayside, and Benjamin Cardozo, with histories of academic excellence, had begun experiencing breakdowns spurred by their bused-in minorities. The limousine liberals of affluent Queens County watched disconcertedly as parents and teachers of these progressive bastions cried out in protest. But the Arthur Katzmans of Forest Hills had the political sophistication that was lacking in the Mike Longs of Brooklyn.

The appearance of the new Community Association, with its right-wing flavor, also presented some special problems for UFT's high school vice president, George Altomare. He had returned to his teaching post at Lane, a victim of an Albert Shanker purge during the 1968 strike. Altomare and I, both members of the union's citywide executive board, were extremely conscious of the UFT priority of rebuilding its bridges into the black community. These were bridges that had been all but destroyed during the disastrous 1968 school strike which had pitted the powerful white union against the black community. The liberal coalition of organized labor and civil rights groups had been shattered in the battles over Ocean Hill and over disagreements on the specifics of school decentralization. But 1969 was above all a time for healing to enable that coalition to be rebuilt. How would it look for a union bent on convincing the black community of its progressivism to have two of its officials courting a group which in the eyes of the liberal establishment represented something pretty close to the polar right? Because of this overbearing union priority, the marriage between the association and the Lane UFT chapter was never consummated. From time to time various teachers attended association meetings and gave direct reports to the chapter council. I myself had turned down several invitations to appear as a guest speaker. It was not until March 26 that I attended my first and only association meeting, at Hoffman's urging. He had told me that the other members of the executive committee were complaining that the chapter was using the association as a battering ram, and that they (the association leaders) needed to be able to show teacher support to answer their own critics. Reluctantly, I accepted the invite to address a general membership meeting on the zoning issue.

The association had picked up steam after the January 20 burning of Frank Siracusa, a white science teacher and Woodhaven resident, by three black youths. Coincidentally, Siracusa had delivered a speech from the floor at the association's January 17 meeting, castigating the school administration for its failure to deal with the mushrooming violence. (He was never quite convinced that the burning was unrelated to his remarks that evening.) Following the burning, the association drew a massive crowd to its January 30 meeting. All the politicos were there for this one. The vote to demand the removal of Selub carried nearly unanimously. Earlier, Mike Long had charged that Selub hadn't done anything in the past and wouldn't do anything in the future to assure student safety.

Then it was Sadowski's turn, and Schmidt squirmed in his seat as the district leader cried: "Bring back racial balance and we'll have peace again."[9]

The zoning question was next on the agenda, and Long for the first time suggested cutting off the Brooklyn boundary at Pennsylvania Avenue, a point about two miles to the west, thus eliminating a large section of the nonwhite area.

On March 26 I addressed the association for the first time and was shocked to learn that its executive committee had earlier in the evening voted to call for a mass demonstration at the school (on March 28) just two days off.

Sandra Feldman, Shanker's girl Friday, was already leaning on me to disassociate the chapter from the association's zoning proposals, contending that the chapter's association with the group was a source of embarrassment to the central organization. The next day the *Long Island Press* carried the story under the heading, "FRANKLIN K. LANE PARENTS PLAN DEMONSTRATION AT SCHOOL," with Mike Long cajoling, "I'd like to see a thousand of our neighbors there. If we get a tremendous turnout then Mayor Lindsay and the Central Zoning unit will know who we are when we go there."[10]

The article tied in the call for the demonstration with my address on the zoning issue. To anyone reading the story there could be little doubt that the UFT was a cosponsor, at least, of the March 28 demonstration.

The demonstration came off as planned with several hundred association members marching along Jamaica Avenue in front of the main entrance, and within police barricades, until thirty minutes before the dismissal of school. It was only then that they agreed to disband, on the basis of a pledge made by a mayoral aide, Rick Tapia, that they would be granted an audience with top school officials to present their zoning plans. Shouting, "Selub Must Go," and bearing signs with slogans like, "MAKE LANE A NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL," they marched until they were convinced they had made their point.

The community had entered the field of battle.

From the association's viewpoint the demonstration was a grand success. It had shown its ability to turn out masses of local people in a non-crisis situation, and had gotten extensive press and television coverage for its demands. The demonstration had even won the association an entrée into the inner sanctums of the school bureaucracy, and on April 11 its leaders met with Deputy Superintendent Nathan Brown to present their case. But the meeting with Brown was unproductive, and at the next general membership meeting of the association Mike Long announced: "One of the things Brown accused us of is being bigots . . . I never heard of any one in this community mugging others, or that the children of this community were causing problems."[11]

Brown's bigotry smear, or at least Long's interpretation of what the deputy had said, was more than enough to rally the community behind the plan for a sit-in demonstration in the school auditorium the following week.

On April 14 the UFT chapter decided for the first time to throw in with the association and support the April 16 sit-in which the council was referring to as a "Parents-Teachers-Community Vigil for Quality Integrated Education." The vigil, an evening affair in the school auditorium, promised to be a peaceful session. The teachers were, by this time, angry about the broken promises of January 21 and frustrated over having been deceived by the mayor and the school board. Convinced that Lane was being steered along a predetermined course dooming it to segregation in reverse, they decided there was little to lose by supporting the sit-in. There wasn't the slightest indication that there would be any rezoning or any reduction in the size of the incoming class the next September. All signs pointed to a return to the multiple session ten-period day. Time was getting short. Junior high school records were starting to come in. It was either now or never! We would support the sit-in, it was decided, and take whatever criticism resulted from it. How could things get any worse?

For most of the forty teachers who participated, the sit-in with about 300 parents on the evening of April 16 was a degrading experience, one which they would never quite forget. The vigil was planned as a peaceful protest against the board's zoning policies and was intended to focus attention on a matter of deep concern to the community. The community association had chosen an evening on which the regular Parents Association was meeting so as to avoid giving the impression that they were forcing themselves into the building. They had even apprised Selub and the 75th precinct that they would be at the school on April 16, and that they would leave peacefully when asked.

Things might have gone differently that evening if Selub had been permitted to handle the situation on his own. He had met with both Long and Galliani in the past and accommodations had been worked out on matters of mutual concern. Even on this night of the sit-in Long had told Selub that they would leave on his request. It was all prearranged. There would be no infraction of the law, Selub was told. But when the principal finally went before the assemblage to make his announcement at 10:00 P.M. he flubbed, forgetting to mention the fact that he and Long had reached an accord on the time limit. It appeared to the demonstrators that Selub was throwing them out under the threat of arrest.

Complicating the affair was Elizabeth C. O'Daly, the District 19 superintendent, whose contempt for the Cypress Hills community and its leaders was well known. O'Daly had come into the school system in 1928 and, like so many of her contemporaries, had been intimately involved with various ultraliberal groups. By 1946 she had advanced to the position of principal, then to assistant superintendent in charge of the junior high school division in 1958, and a district superintendency in charge of the Brownsville–Bedford-Stuyvesant schools in 1961. In 1964 she was tapped for the sensitive post of heading up the board's More Effective Schools (MES) program. In 1967, after having clashed with Donovan over MES policy, she left that position and came to East New York as head of the largest of the school system's thirty districts.

O'Daly's own political philosophy, well to the left of center, made it impossible for her to deal fairly and objectively with the people of Cypress Hills. She could well afford to be contemptuous of their politics since only six of her district's thirty-one schools were located in that section of the district. Her primary concern since coming to East New York was with the black community in the core area of the district where almost two-thirds of the district's schools were located.

O'Daly saw the sit-in as a challenge to her authority, a breakdown in her administration. It had always been her policy, however, to refrain from the use of police against local demonstrations. Several months later, in fact, she refused to order the removal of nine black militants who had taken over the seats of the local school board and declared themselves to be the new people's board. The rump group forced the bona fide board to adjourn to another room to conduct its public meeting, but O'Daly dared not risk inflaming the passions of the militants by using the law to oust the pretenders. But on the evening of April 16 it was quite another story at Lane High School, and she saw fit to take the hard line against frustrated neighborhood people whose politics happened to differ from her own.

Under O'Daly's direction, Selub signed a document authorizing the police to remove any person who refused his order to leave. At 10:00 P.M. O'Daly, armed with the two black members of the local school board and the captain of the 75th police precinct, accompanied Selub on a dramatic march up the aisle and to the front of the auditorium where the principal proceeded to read a prepared statement warning that persons refusing to leave would be arrested for trespassing. Long had given him his out, but in the heat of the moment Selub forgot to announce the accord reached earlier in the evening. It was a costly error for the beleaguered principal, and the crowd hissed and chanted, "DOWN WITH SELUB," and "O'DALY MUST GO," as they left in disgust.

They had assembled peacefully, exercising their right to protest. They had seen their neighborhood high school torn apart with racial strife, their children maligned, and property destroyed. And they had come to tell the school bureaucracy and city fathers that they wanted a change. But instead they had been treated almost like common criminals.

April 16, 1969, was not a night the local community would soon forget.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Letter from Esther M. Swanker, assistant to the deputy commissioner of education for New York State, to Harold Saltzman, July 3, 1968.
2. *New York Times,* May 15, 1969.
3. *Long Island Press,* May 16, 1969.
4. *Woodhaven Leader-Observer,* Dec. 26, 1968.
5. Letter to Harold Saltzman from Deputy Superintendent Nathan Brown, May 13, 1969.
6. *Long Island Press,* May 21, 1969.
7. *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1969.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, Jan. 31, 1969.
10. *Ibid.*, March 27, 1969.
11. *Ibid.*, April 12, 1969.

Chapter 5

A Student Riot and a Mayoral Election

The big brown Oldsmobile sedan turned right off Third Avenue and headed east on 88th Street toward Gracie Mansion. For Albert Shanker and the other UFT officials it was a familiar scene. The newsmen were waiting as the union president crossed East End Avenue and steered his car past the iron gates that shielded the mayor from the everyday bizarre happenings of the city. What had brought the officialdom of the nation's largest local union to the mayor's residence at 6:00 P.M. on a Friday evening, just eighty-four hours before the people of New York were scheduled to go to the polls to choose their next mayor? Gracie Mansion was a place that stirred only the bitterest of memories for the UFT leaders, and on the four-mile drive uptown from the union's 21st Street headquarters, returning to the scene where they had suffered some of their most heartbreaking defeats, this was a recurring thought for them.

Gracie Mansion, a large white neocolonial structure situated on several sprawling acres of scenic real estate overlooking

Manhattan's East River, was the home the people of the great metropolis provided for their mayor. For the UFT leaders it had a very special meaning; it was here that they were outwitted and outmaneuvered during the teacher strikes of 1967 and 1968. In that first year it was John Lindsay, siding with School Board President Alfred Giardino and Superintendent Bernard Donovan, who helped prolong a fourteen-day strike that set the tone for the ultimate disaster the following year. It was that triumvirate which converted the union's legitimate program for dealing with emotionally disturbed youngsters into the false public impression that the UFT wanted to force black youngsters out of the public schools. For the first time, the alliance the union had welded with the civil rights, liberal, and minority groups of the city was split asunder. The union's demand for expansion of its More Effective Schools program of specialized and concentrated educational services for ghetto schools went almost unnoticed in 1967, and by the time the three-week stoppage ended on September 29 John Lindsay had emerged as a shining knight. His own image was untarnished, and to many he was the hero of the hour; the man who had stood off that "big, bad powerful union of opportunistic and selfish teachers." The UFT had for the first time in its history tasted bitter defeat, and in spite of Shanker's victory claim the teachers and their now badly divided leadership knew that something dreadful had happened. The mayor and the school board had cleverly pitted them against the parents and liberal sectors of the body politic, their traditional and natural allies. Who could have envisioned black parents counter-picketing in front of neighborhood schools; those same parents who had walked on UFT picket lines in battles past? And after fourteen days of struggle, settlements that were somehow never finalized, came the end product: a contract containing a watered-down and meaningless disruptive child provision which was impossible to administer; no expansion of the top-priority More Effective Schools program; little plugging of gaping loopholes in working conditions carried over from the 1965 agreement; and salary gains that were meager in terms of the union's objectives and the galloping inflation. Fifty thousand teachers had participated in the strike, but their unity began to show cracks on three different occasions when union members filtered back, crossing their own picket lines as rumors of pending settlements flew about.

Gracie Mansion was an old story to Albert Shanker and the other union officers. Again in 1968 the mayor had humbled the UFT, forcing it to stay on strike for thirty-six days this time, and helping to create a racial polarization over the firings in the Ocean Hill school district that nearly destroyed the town. Through ineptitude, and out of a perverted bias against unionism, the mayor set race against race and painted the UFT with an anti-black smear from which it would not soon recover. And in 1968, too, the mansion was the scene of the hottest conflict as the mayor played off the Ocean Hill crowd against Albert Shanker and the teachers union.

But it was all very different a year later. On the evening of October 31, 1969, just four days before the polls would open to determine whether or not he would continue in office for another four-year term, the mayor of the City of New York felt free to call upon his old enemy, Albert Shanker, in a moment of need. It didn't matter that the *Daily News* straw poll that morning had shown him way ahead with 47 percent of the vote, his closest opponent, Mario Procaccino, well behind with 29 percent, and Republican John Marchi a distant third with only 20 percent. The mayor was on the verge of achieving a political miracle. Through a carefully planned campaign he had swung enough of the UFT-connected constituency, the Jewish middle class, to snatch victory from almost certain defeat and keep alive his hopes of entering presidential politics in 1972.

But on the afternoon of October 31 what the mayor dreaded most had happened, and it happened at Franklin K. Lane High School. If there was a single issue that could upset the delicate plurality John Lindsay had fashioned, it surely was the race question, especially as it was related to the schools. In a well-balanced campaign he had promised the voters safety in the streets and in the schools, pledging that the schools would not again be turned into battlegrounds by unrepresentative minorities of minorities. But the racial violence that erupted at

Lane that day could have easily destroyed in the minds of wary voters the notion that John Lindsay had learned from his mistakes and wouldn't again turn the town and its schools over to black extremists. The mayor had become closely identified with Lane after the Siracusa burning in January. When trouble broke out there again in October, he made one pronouncement after another about his refusal to tolerate disruption that interfered with daily instruction. After the burning he had sent in his own personal representative, J. David Love, to participate in the negotiations at the school and head off a pending job action by the faculty.

Later, it was Lindsay's School Task Force aide, Richard Streiter, who came to the rescue, cutting the red tape and getting the fire and buildings departments to approve in days the Arlington Church site to be utilized as a Lane annex for the returning truants. And when school opened in September, Louis Feldstein, Lindsay's School Task Force director, was a frequent visitor at Lane, making it quite clear that the school was still a major concern to City Hall.

Mario Procaccino, the Democratic candidate, was desperate in the closing days of a badly run, disorganized, and highly disappointing campaign. Five months earlier it seemed impossible for the comptroller to lose. But here, four days before the election, he found himself eighteen percentage points behind the mayor in the city's most reputable poll. He had run a straight law-and-order campaign, and was quick to jump on the riot that broke out at Lane that afternoon. It might be his last chance to hit the mayor where he was most vulnerable, the issue of racial violence in the schools. If the comptroller had planted his own agents in Lane they couldn't have done a better job of providing him with ammunition to fire at the mayor. The fall semester at Lane had been an instant replay of the one just passed.

The term had opened quietly at Lane, and in schools throughout the city there was a note of optimism. During the first month of the semester there was little of the tension which had become an everyday thing in the Cypress Hills school during the previous school year. Students walked through the halls smiling, talking about all the good things that were happening—the moon landing, the champion New York Mets—and there were definite signals that the wounds of last year were beginning to heal. This was a brand-new school year, and wasn't high school supposed to be a happy, a rewarding life experience, the place you met your first love, the time when you went to parties, dances, athletic events, and the prom? It could all be so wonderful, if only . . .

There *were* signs that fall that the worst was over. Student cutting was down; there was less lateness than usual; there had been no confrontations between students and teachers; and none of that racial antagonism was evident in the places where large numbers of students congregated. The police were still in the building, but they had blended in with the scenery and were hardly noticed by most students. And there were only thirty-five new teachers added to the staff, half the number that had come in for previous fall semesters. For a school where staff turnover was a serious problem, the possibility of stabilizing the faculty was promising. Yes, the prospects for a good school year at Lane were more encouraging in September, 1969, than they had been for some time.

Steps had even been taken to meet demands presented by the militants. The crisis of the fall semester, paradoxically, had roots in the demand to add courses in black studies to the curriculum. These course offerings were introduced in the fall term and the militants were given the first opportunity to enroll in them. An abundance of material was made available by the Social Studies Department, and to answer the demand for black instructors, Ronald King, a black health education teacher, was given the job of teaching one of the courses in African studies. King had been a member of the faculty since 1962. He became a part-time guidance counselor in 1966 and in 1968 served as one of the two faculty advisers to the school's African Culture Association. In June, 1969, also in response to the militants' demand for black administrators, a new post was created especially for him, that of assistant to the assistant principal (Mary Cohen). King, a former union member, dropped out of the organization in 1967 because of the disruptive child row and later became something of a spokesman for the school's twenty anti-UFT teachers who broke into the building to conduct classes for a handful of students during the 1968 strike.

King's associate in the black studies program was Robert Lubetsky, a white twenty-five-year-old disciple of the new left who identified strongly with the militant wing of the black movement. If Leslie Campbell supplied the emotionalism for the black nationalist philosophy in the back rooms of the Afro-American Teachers Association headquarters, Lubetsky certainly provided the intellectualization and academic substance sustaining that point of view. On several occasions, Paul McSloy, acting chairman of the social studies department, was obliged to order the teacher to remove provocative Black Panther posters he had displayed on the wall of room 248, the room used for the three black studies courses. There was always a question in the minds of most of his colleagues in the Social Studies Department as to whether or not the material was displayed for illustrative purposes consistent with good teaching technique. His critics contended that his course was primarily an indoctrination program, and that the teacher was using his classroom as a forum to express his own political views. (It should be noted that these general feelings were never substantiated as fact and that no charges were ever brought against him.) But the black studies program, controversial from its inception because of the instructors teaching in it and the students it attracted, became the focal point of events leading up to that riot of October 31.

By mid-October, for a variety of reasons, there was a noticeable shift in the wind. The goodwill and harmony that had characterized the opening weeks began to dissipate. The change was attributable, in part, to the overcrowded conditions which were being exacerbated each day. The school had returned to that multiple-session ten-period day, with students and teachers coming and going in shifts. Adding to the confusion *after* the semester began was the enrollment of 550 new students in September and 262 more in October. Some were new residents in the Lane zone. Some were transfers from nonzoned or private schools. But most of the new youngsters were drop-outs from vocational schools who weren't making it there. Many of them were academically handicapped to start with, and many were discipline problems who had been *encouraged* to leave the trade schools. In November, 1969, Mary Cohen did a survey to support her contention, made to Superintendent Jacob Zack, that the vocational schools regularly rid themselves of problem students by shifting them to the academic schools. Zack had asked Cohen for substantiation of this charge and she gave it to him, showing that in a random sampling of the transferees from vocational schools, 40 percent had been chronic truants. In spite of the evidence, Lane was back to where it had been the year before. Again bulging with 5,300 students it was ripe for another explosion. All that was needed was the spark.

That spark was provided by the militants. For the first month of the term they had been quiet, watching and waiting. But they weren't going to let the school recover from the shock treatment they had given it the term before. It was time for another dose. On October 22 they decided to "do their thing," and "their thing" was to begin in room 248, where they took their black studies courses. It all started over a flag, and it was to escalate into uncontrollable mob rule on October 31, nine days later. The black, green, and red flag had become the symbol of the black nationalist movement with a tradition rooted in the Marcus Garvey crusade of the 1920s. For some time the militants and their corps of followers had refused to stand for the pledge of allegiance which was part of the morning classroom exercise. The American flag, they argued, was not *their* flag, and they spouted all the slogans about the nation's hypocrisy and its persecution of the black man. But on October 22 they decided to do more than just reject the American flag; on this day they decided to replace that "rag" which hung in room 248 with their own flag of the black nation. Room 248 was their turf, they contended, and wasn't the whole course of study a result of *their* demands and especially designed for *them?* And hadn't *they* been practically handpicked for it? Why shouldn't they be able to replace the U.S. flag with their own, the only flag that had any real meaning for black people? Surely, Lubetsky and King wouldn't object, they reasoned.

The chickens were coming home to roost.

What the militants didn't understand, however, and had no way of knowing, was Morton Selub's sensitivity on the flag issue. While it was true that Selub opposed the mandated morning pledge of allegiance exercise because it was so freely violated by both militant blacks and new left white teachers, the flying of the colors was quite a different matter. He had tried dropping the pledge when the fall term began, and was quickly taken to task for it by the Community Association. It was reestablished in the morning exercise without question. But the most important consideration was Selub's remembrance of the April 16 sit-in in the school auditorium by the angry white community; a night he was vehemently berated and openly insulted by some of the demonstrators because there was no American flag in the auditorium.

"What kind of school is this?" one woman had angrily asked. "Isn't this still the United States of America?" another demanded.

The absence of the flag and the animosity it generated was the topic of the next day's newspaper account. The purpose of the sit-in was lost in the discussion of loyalty and patriotism. It didn't matter to the crowd that it was common practice to keep the colors locked up in a casing in the lobby every evening. It was another strike against the principal. And it was with this experience clearly coming to mind that Morton Selub injected himself directly into the flag incident in room 248, as irate faculty members registered complaints about the alien symbol that had replaced the stars and stripes in that controversial classroom.

It was readily conceded that from an academic standpoint no one in the school, and probably very few in the entire system, was more qualified to teach African history and Swahili than Robert Lubetsky. A product of the city's public schools, he went on to graduate from Syracuse University in 1966, and in 1967 earned his master's degree in African history from the University of Manchester in England. He had imposing credentials when he began his teaching career in 1968 at the predominantly black and Puerto Rican Eastern District High School in Brooklyn. That first assignment was a disappointing experience which almost led him to give up on the city's public school system. He left Eastern District after one semester to take a position at Lane which he had secured from Selub through a family connection.

Lubetsky's career at Lane got off to a shaky start in 1968. Interpreting the UFT strike as an attack against the demonstration district in Ocean Hill and against the black community in general, he regarded the stoppage as incompatible with his own sociopolitical ideas. He joined the ranks of the nonstriking teachers and for ten weeks crossed the picket lines amid the jeers of striking colleagues whom he would later have to face inside. After the strike, Lubetsky, more than any of the twenty strike-breakers, was singled out for interminable scorn by the UFT teachers . . . he was ostracized by his own department and by most of the faculty. Little wonder that the UFT teachers should have blamed him for the flag incident which was to erupt into the riot a week later.

The flag of black liberation was hoisted by the militants for the first time on the morning of October 21. While both King and Lubetsky, during the periods they used the room, discussed the propriety of the flag, neither made any attempt to have it removed. The discussion in the black studies classes centered on whether or not the flag should replace the stars and stripes. Most of the youngsters, according to Lubetsky, were willing to accept some form of compromise with the majority favoring the retention of the American flag. But the militants had other ideas. Comprising about a third of each of the three black studies groups, they were determined to win their point. The American flag had no place in room 248, they insisted, and the flag of the black nation must replace it! The lines were being drawn.

What had begun as an internal class matter moved to the next stage of confrontation the following day. Lubetsky had been told by Assistant Principal Todaro that the American flag could not be removed. But the militants weren't to be denied and throughout the day more black students were dragged into the encounter. At the beginning of each class period hordes of youngsters rushed up to room 248 and occupied it, preventing it from being used by the regularly scheduled classes. There would be no instruction in room 248 until the flag question was resolved, they decreed. By the end of the day the issue was a schoolwide affair with curious students congregating around the room to get a glimpse at the intrigue that was unfolding there. Two days of conflict, confined until then to a single room, had gone unsettled and no one seemed to have a solution to the impasse. Unfortunately, Selub was at a meeting at board headquarters the day the incident began to escalate. The school day ended with a meeting between King, Lubetsky, Mary Cohen, and one of the leading provocateurs of the flag incident. The militant leader was appealed to by the educators, advised that this was not a battle worth fighting, and urged to drop the occupation of the classroom.

But there was no turning back for the militants. By 9:00 A.M. the next day they had occupied room 248 again, more than seventy students crammed into a room that seats forty-two. The students of all three black studies sections had banded together, pulling in others of similar persuasion. This was to be the day of decision! How far could they go, and what would the principal do?

They didn't have to wait long for their answer. While the militants were reoccupying room 248, Selub was meeting with King, Lubetsky, Cohen, and Todaro to map their own strategy and decide how best to approach the tense situation. When word of the occupation reached them, Selub decided to take a rather firm position compared to what his reaction had been in previous confrontations with militants. He rejected Lubetsky's proposal to allow both flags to fly side by side, and entered room 248, the gladiator walking into the lion's den. The mood was hostile. King and Lubetsky stood off to the side as the principal went before the group searching for a compromise they could buy. But the militants weren't looking for a solution. For them it was either total victory or confrontation! The more Selub groped for a way out, the more intolerant the militants became of his involvement. The principal honestly believed that a compromise was possible and that if he could only hit upon a method of letting the militants back off and save face the matter could be settled. He was sadly mistaken. As the morning dragged on, the second-floor corridor became a pressure point. Word of the meeting with Selub had spread throughout the school, and after the principal left to discuss the matter with aides more black youths forced their way into the room during period changes. The police had been notified the previous day and there were countless plainclothesmen and uniformed officers in the immediate vicinity of room 248 and dispersed all over the school.

After several hours of fruitless talk and suffering through verbal abuse hurled his way by the militants, the principal broke off the discussion and announced his final position: The American flag must be returned to its rightful place, and the Garvey flag could be hung anywhere else in the room as part of a display pertinent to the unit under study. Now he would leave the room and let them decide whether or not to accept the offer. It was rejected and they defied the principal's order to vacate the room. His patience tried beyond reason, Selub went next door to the social studies office and began phoning the parents of the militant leaders. Their youngsters were under suspense, he told them, and the parents would have to come to school for the suspense hearing. It was the first time he had taken a forthright stand in dealing with political students. Even Ronald King, who had earlier appealed to them to accept a compromise, found his words falling on deaf ears. They had already rejected Lubetsky because they believed he was siding with Selub against them. Now they were going all the way!

There had been differences among them over where the flag should fly, but now they coalesced. Unwilling to accept an ultimatum, which to them was tantamount to defeat, they struck out, venting their hostility and destroying those objects in the classroom which were part of the "oppressive" system against which they were rebelling. Maps were torn off the wall and ripped to shreds, lightbulbs were broken, a globe shattered. And as the frenzy moved toward a climax, the word was given and out into the halls they marched. All hell broke loose! Arm in arm, in columns four abreast, they paraded down the hall with the leaders up front holding the liberation flag high as they marched onward. Through the corridors they advanced, banging on classroom doors, exhorting students to leave their classes and join the demonstration. Their numbers grew, eighty, ninety, soon more than a hundred.

"Power to the people," they chanted in unison, and down the stairwell to the first floor. Meanwhile, word of the march had filtered down to the students' cafeteria. It never took much to start a disturbance there . . . it had been the scene of many . . . and in typical fashion tables and benches went flying, milk containers and trays of food splattering all over the large room, almost a thousand students in the grips of hysteria. Those whites who hadn't already fled the building as the unbearable tension mounted through the morning now left immediately. They had learned from past experience that the cafeteria was the last place to be when the militants swung into action. By the time the first wave of demonstrators reached the first floor, their numbers had swelled to well over a hundred, and kept growing with each passing moment. The police were under orders not to interfere with them. The mood reached dimensions well out of control. Police, thirty to forty of them, stood by helplessly. Their hands in the pockets, they watched in disbelief as the mob grew larger, and louder, and bolder. Teachers, fearful of their own safety, ducked into empty offices and classrooms, locking the doors behind them to get out of the path of the onrushing demonstrators. Chaos and anarchy was the order of the day. Disruption, intimidation, violence everywhere. The police looked on as frightened students ran past. The demonstrators continued their march, circling the first floor, past the principal's office and back again. Then up to the second floor they climbed and finding room 248 locked they headed for the nearest room big enough to seat the large following they had attracted. They broke the window of room 236, unlocked the door from the inside, and congregated to assess what they had done, to evaluate, and to plan their next move.

When questioned about the charge that the police had failed to act in the face of lawlessness, William Cerrone, captain of the 75th police precinct, replied: "The order of this command is that if there is any criminal activity and an officer sees it, he will make an arrest. Where it is a matter of internal discipline, it is a school problem."[1]

The eyes of the faculty turned toward the principal. Angry teachers, unaware of the posture he had assumed in room 248, blamed him for giving in to the militants. How, they thought, could a handful of students be permitted to go this far, disrupting an entire school, endangering the health and safety of thousands of students? Someone had goofed, and that someone must have been the principal, most believed. Surely he could have been more decisive! In the past, incidents like this were immediately brought to the attention of the UFT chapter leadership, and the faculty had come to expect union action when the administration floundered. Jim Baumann and Edward Johnson, two social studies teachers in their mid-twenties, had been elected cochairmen of the UFT chapter in June after I decided to step down to devote more time to my post as the union's District 19 representative. Although new and inexperienced in handling crisis situations, they quickly made their concerns known to Selub and his assistants. The failure of the police to act was unconscionable and inexcusable. What steps would be taken, they inquired, to prevent a recurrence? The new chairmen had the added task of establishing their credentials as faculty spokesmen. Angry at Selub, but cautious in their new role, they issued a memorandum calling for an emergency council meeting the next afternoon. In their statement to the press the UFT chairmen observed: "Some windows were broken by rocks and the demonstrators literally ignored the police and the principal. The teachers, many of them shaken and very much disturbed, will take appropriate action."[2]

If mass confusion was the order of the day on October 23, the next day, a Friday, was even more chaotic. Literature had been prepared overnight by the Afro-American Students Association, the group with which Lane's militants were most closely tied. The flyers they distributed the next morning assailed Selub for having insulted their flag, called attention to the "pigs," and urged students to join with them in "open defiance of the racist teachers and UFT."

It was going to be another one of those days. The militant leaders who were not among the five suspended by Selub were seen huddling in groups in the stairwells and congregating in the auditorium, the favorite gathering place from where they planned their moves on a period to period basis. Thursday's episode had been covered thoroughly by the media, and many parents, fearful for their children's safety, kept the youngsters home. Thus attendance was light, even for a Friday. But for the militants this was to be another day of confrontation, and the tactic was to march out of the building behind the nationalist flag after each period. All morning students entered and left. There was constant unexplained motion but no effort was made to restrict the movement in and out of school. Cutting of classes was widespread and few subject sections had as many as a third of the total register present. Masses of students congregated in the student cafeteria as word spread that this was the place to blow first.

In spite of the presence of thirty or forty policemen in the building, and many more on standby outside, the riot erupted in the cafeteria on signal! A look of the eye, a nod, bang . . . it was on again. Tables and chairs flying about, an exact repetition of the previous day. Those whites who did come to school, and they were few, knew enough by this time to stay out of the cafeteria; they found refuge in departmental or administrative offices supervised by teachers. But even as the disrupters made their mad dash for the exits there were at least two separate incidents of unprovoked attacks against whites fleeing the school.

Fleeing was just the thing to do, for years of bitterness and seething frustration were coming to the surface. In the melee two youngsters were arrested for inciting a riot. By 1:00 P.M. there was only a fraction of the student body left in the building. The UFT Chapter Council met briefly at the end of the day and decided to call for a meeting of the full chapter on Monday. The militants had proved their point again; they had the power and the know-how to put a stop to the entire educational process, *and get away with it.* There were a few more suspensions, like those of the day before, for the maximum five-day period. The militants would be back soon, and were to be heard from again. The 1969 State Legislature, in its haste to give students the right of due process, had guaranteed the right of the militants to destroy public education . . . a five-day suspense and they were right back at Lane! That was the law!

During the winter and spring of the previous semester, John Lindsay had made numerous statements about the intolerable conditions in the high schools and how the city could not allow violence on the campuses. Amidst reports of continued racial flare-ups at Lane and at nearby John Adams High School in Ozone Park, the mayor spoke out again. But it was an old tune, a tired speech with time-worn clichés; the kind of talk the people had heard before. Anyway, it was an election year and in 1969 the candidates were all supposed to be for *law and order.* The mayor warned the disrupters: "To the students of Franklin K. Lane and John Adams High Schools, I want to make very clear that we cannot and will not tolerate disorder. Differences can and must be settled peacefully." In concluding his remarks, the mayor said he had called upon the Board of Education "to take all necessary action to maintain order in both schools and to report all developments to me immediately."[3]

Conditions stabilized somewhat when the school opened on October 27, the beginning of a new week. The flag incidents, the demonstrations, the verbal barrage and intimidation to which they had been subjected during the week just passed, filled the teachers with apprehension as they returned to see what the new week held in store. Over the weekend Baumann and Johnson had drafted a proposed chapter resolution to press the need for relief and reform, and to place the school board on notice that the union chapter would not sit by much longer. It was a well-conceived and responsible document they offered to the UFT chapter at its October 27 meeting. But tempers were running high, and for the new chairmen it was the first test of their leadership under fire. They were criticized from the right by militant teachers who found the proposals too mild and demanded, at least, the inclusion of a threat of a walkout. At the opposite pole there were the liberals who found the language dealing with the race question too strong and argued that it would be objectionable to the black community. George Altomare, the UFT high school vice president, had gotten deeply involved in the current crisis and argued strongly in behalf of the proposed resolution. It was designed as an initial statement to be built upon if the need for more drastic action was necessary at some future time, he cautioned. The resolution, amended in several places to meet the specific objections of different segments of the staff, was approved by a near unanimous vote reflecting the general opinion of the faculty.

The resolution stated the causes of the disruption in a five-paragraph preamble, and went on to resolve:

1. That we reaffirm our commitment to provide the best possible education for every student at Lane High School, and
2. That we call upon the Board of Education in conjunction with the UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS to engage in a cooperative effort with labor, business, and civic groups to create a special task force for the purpose of converting Lane High School into an experimental comprehensive academic-vocational-technical institution and for the city to announce its total commitment through the allocation of funds which will reverse the downward spiral and establish Lane as a model for educational excellence in the City of New York, and
3. That we call upon all those communities which presently send youngsters to Lane High School to join us in announcing their support for the principle of quality integrated education, and
4. That we call upon the student body to join us in rejecting all forms of racial extremism . . . and,
5. That we call upon the school administration to deal promptly and directly with any teacher or student who through his actions in the school perpetrates violence, and that such persons shall be afforded all rights of counsel and equal protection of the law consistent with the fundamental notions of due process, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED,

That the events of last week, however disturbing, shall not shake our unswerving faith in the future of public education on an integrated basis and our dedication to the concept of the brotherhood of man.[4]

Copies of the chapter resolution were sent to the school board and to city officials. The union chapter was now on record with a positive and forward-looking position. They could not again be smeared as racists. The next day Baumann and Johnson sent a special delivery letter to the mayor, enclosing a copy of the resolution and asking that he commit himself "through the allocation of funds . . . and establish Lane as a model for educational excellence in the City . . ."[5]

Little did they know that in just seventy-two hours Baumann would be sitting face to face with the mayor at an emergency meeting at Gracie Mansion.

Now it was October 31 and Jim Baumann sped his car through the Queens Midtown Tunnel and into Manhattan, his destination the central UFT headquarters on Park Avenue South and 21st Street. It was only 2:00 P.M., an hour that normally found teachers performing their classroom duties. But this hadn't been a normal school day at Franklin K. Lane. Already UFT public relations director Dan Sanders had sent out a press release which was being carried over the local radio stations:

> Albert Shanker, President of the United Federation of Teachers, demanded an immediate meeting today with Mayor Lindsay and the Board of Education to take steps to insure the proper functioning of the city's high schools in light of the disorders at Franklin K. Lane High School. The teachers union leader declared that "the safety and well-being of children in our schools must be the first order of business at this meeting . . ."[6]

Had Shanker gotten to Lindsay early . . . or had the mayor reached the union chief first? It was only four days before the mayoralty election and Mario Procaccino had already blasted away at the mayor for creating an atmosphere in the city conducive to violence and lawlessness in the schools. It fit right in with the Democratic candidate's major theme during the campaign.

Only five months earlier, at a meeting of UFT high school chapter chairmen, Albert Shanker had placed much of the blame for the school crisis on the mayor: "Obviously, the city set a kind of tone," the union head declared. "Fifty per cent of the problem will be enhanced or cut back, depending on the mayoralty election. We can't put out the fire in one school at a time."[7]

John Lindsay was being put on notice. He would have to deliver if he had any hopes of neutralizing the powerful teachers union and its clever president.

But that was five long months ago, and Shanker's implied threat of a sustained UFT campaign against the mayor's reelection bid never materialized. The enmity between the two protagonists in the Ocean Hill clash had been brought under reasonable control and both moved to close the communications gap. The mayor and the UFT president both recognized that to remain at odds would be self-defeating, laying to rest whatever personal aspirations each held for the future. Lindsay, rejected by his own Republican party in the June primary, was running for reelection as an Independent with the Liberal party's endorsement. His only hope of winning was to recapture at least half of the city's Jewish vote, a vote that was expected to run as high as 35 percent of the total ballots cast. It was also a vote with which Shanker had immense influence through his own great personal prestige in the Jewish community. Of the system's 60,000 teachers more than two-thirds were Jewish, and through their civic, religious, and fraternal organizations they could have been instrumental in mounting a mighty campaign against the mayor. How easy it could have been to remind New York's Jewry of the black anti-Semitism the mayor had unleashed against them by siding with the extremists of Ocean Hill. These wounds could have been reopened without too much trouble. And John Lindsay knew it!

If ever a mayor needed a labor leader, John Lindsay needed Albert Shanker in 1969. For in the hands of the UFT president was the power to destroy the political career of a man many envisoned as a 1972 presidential candidate. After the strike Lindsay moved steadily to establish his credibility with the union. The question of school decentralization was still up in the air. It had been at the core of the Ocean Hill dispute and now the mayor would have to pay heavily for the suffering to which he had subjected the union. He began by trying to force the Doar-Galamison school board (appointed by him) to soften its own decentralization plan to meet specific objections of the union. Paradoxically, it was a plan the mayor himself had set in motion two years earlier by endorsing the Bundy Report, which recommended community control of the schools. But the price for community control was his own certain defeat in his reelection bid. It was a price the mayor refused to pay.

At the very least, he would have to abandon his own radical ideas on decentralization. The power and prestige of the city administration would have to be taken out of the legislative battle about to be waged in Albany. It was. The Doar-Galamison board, abandoned by the mayor and with no broad base of support from a public it had alienated by its irresponsible actions during the 1968 school strike, was supported in the legislative halls by few of the major power blocs of New York. Lacking the confidence of the town's diverse and disgruntled populace, the school board had little punch behind its lobbying efforts for a far-reaching community control bill. The mayor's silence during the long and bitter debate could be interpreted in only one way. He and Shanker had finally begun talking the same language.

The union came out well in Albany. The eleventh-hour compromise bill it supported retained almost every point essential for the preservation of a centralized school system and more important for Shanker, a centralized union local. All collective bargaining would still be done centrally, and there would be no separate negotiations with local school boards. The centralized Board of Examiners, the certification agency, would be retained and there would still be central placement of teachers off lists from competitive examinations, a safeguard against pick and choose union-busting districts like Ocean Hill. The central school board would continue to operate; but it would comprise a representative of each borough to be appointed by the respective borough president, and later on to be elected by the registered voters in boroughwide elections.* The mayor would then appoint two people of his own choosing to round out the seven-member central board. And the union would be able to use its newfound political muscle to influence the outcome of that election as well as those for the thirty-one community school boards.

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*When boroughwide elections for the school board were found to be in violation of the one-man, one-vote principle, the New York State Legislature twice extended the life of the "interim" central board rather than reopen the thorny question of decentralization vs. community control of the schools.

The next hurdle standing in the way of a Shanker-Lindsay alliance was the matter of a new union contract. The 1967 agreement was scheduled to expire in September, 1969, a day before the start of the new school year. It had become traditional for negotiations to go down to the wire, and sometimes past it, but in 1969 it was to everyone's advantage to get an early and amicable settlement. Neither the city nor the union could afford another strike, or even the threat of one. The UFT was busy reestablishing old ties with parent and community groups and didn't dare jeopardize that number-one priority. Even more important was the fact that the UFT's rank and file was tired, very tired. For two consecutive years Shanker had led them into battle. Fifty days of strike, the lost money, the heartaches, the antagonisms on the picket lines, divided faculties, and racial conflicts between white teachers and black communities had all taken their toll. Could he go to his people again? What issue could get them out on the street once more? Another stoppage was sure to result in internal union fratracide, and that above all else had to be avoided.

There was only one issue between the union and the school board in the negotiations of June, 1969, and that was money. This was a new Board of Education (the Doar-Galamison outfit was put out of business by the new decentralization law) and its president, Joseph Monserrat, had already decided that there would be no further whittling away at administrative prerogatives and no more concessions to the union on nonbudgetary items related to working conditions. The union, meanwhile, had gone through the motions, as it had done in every negotiating year since 1962, of having its executive board spend countless hours gleaning the thousands of demands submitted by dozens of different standing committees, subcommittees, functional chapters, and special interest groups operating under the umbrella of the 60,000-member local. But there was no bargaining of the laundry list this time around. Practically no negotiating was carried out at the subcommittee level. With every one aiming for a June 27 settlement, almost all talks were conducted at the highest level. Even the UFT's first-line negotiating committee of eleven officers was dispensed with. Shanker replaced it with a bargaining team consisting of himself, Secretary Jules Kolodny, and Treasurer David Wittes. Added to the select group were Shanker's closest aides, special assistant Sandra Feldman, Staff Director DeLeonardis, and Dan Sanders whom he had appointed coordinator of negotiations.

This was the team responsible for putting a new pact together in June, 1969, and with all parties anxious for a settlement before the end of the school year, Shanker came to his fifty-one-member executive board to ask for a blank check in negotiations. Would the executive board accept whatever package he brought back in June, good or bad, rather than go to the brink again in September? He was given the answer he wanted. There would be no internal fight over ratification, as there had been in 1967, no matter what he came back with. In the end they ratified the new three-year contract after a verbal report from Shanker, without as much as a written outline of the settlement terms.

The 1969 negotiations were carried on quickly and quietly. For the first time in ten years there was no saber rattling around the table, no inflammatory press releases, no charges and countercharges about bad-faith negotiating. Shanker and board president Monserrat had developed a friendly working relationship. It was the first time a UFT head was accepted by the school board as an equal at the bargaining table. All that stood between the union and the board this time around was money, money for a mammoth salary and pension package. The UFT negotiators were quite willing to give in on most of their demands regarding reduced class size, improved working conditions, policy voice at the local level, and school security to get a giant package in salary gains and pension improvements. And it was up to the mayor to provide the money! The three-year contract which was ratified on the very last school day in June added the staggering sum of $1 billion (estimated) to the city's educational budget over the life of the agreement. It was certainly the most costly package ever negotiated with a public employee union.

John Lindsay had made it all possible by giving the board authorization on money matters. He would worry about how to pay for it some other time. Now his primary concern was his reelection bid and he wasn't going to let another teachers' strike, or the threat of one, hang him up again. The early settlement was the cornerstone of the mayor's campaign strategy. The big knock against him had been his inability during most of his four-year term to conduct fruitful negotiations with the city's large and powerful municipal employee unions. In addition to the two teachers strikes, Lindsay had failed to avert stoppages by transit workers, sanitation employees, hospital workers, Welfare Department social workers, and job actions by the police and firemen's unions. It was an astonishingly bad labor record. No mayor in the city's history had been as ineffectual in the area of labor relations.

John Lindsay came to City Hall by way of Congress on New Year's Day of 1966. Belying the liberal reputation he had established in Washington, the former Manhattan congressman brought with him a strong bias against New York's old-line labor leaders. Confronted with a transit strike (which outgoing Mayor Robert Wagner neatly dumped in his lap) during the first days of his administration, he went on television to denounce transit union president Michael Quill and the city's chief labor leaders as "powerbrokers," making it perfectly clear that their days of influence in city government were over. He blamed the unions for much of the trouble the city was in. In Lindsay's patrician view, the unions were the oppressors of the blacks who were kept out of the high-paying construction jobs. And to the new mayor the municipal employee unions were guilty of making the cost of local government prohibitive, and of forcing higher prices and higher taxes which chased businesses out of the city and middle-class whites to the suburbs. But most of all, it just wasn't Lindsay's style to wheel and deal in the back rooms. From his very first day in office, Lindsay refused to acknowledge the tremendous power of Harry Van

Arsdale, head of the Central Labor Council, the giant citywide federation comprising 550 different local unions with an aggregate membership of 1.2 million employees in both the private and the public sectors. The mayor made the costly error of trying instead to use the media he commanded, relying on his own prestige and the power of his office, to go directly to the rank and file, bypassing the elected leadership of the locals. Tagged as a union-buster, he found himself in one strike after another as union leaders became convinced that they couldn't get a fair shake from City Hall.

Marked as the enemy of the working white middle class, scorned for his anti-labor tactics and for what was viewed as his selling out to the black extremists, and rejected by his own Republican party in favor of conservative State Senator John Marchi from Staten Island in the June primary, the future could not have been bleaker for John Lindsay. How could he bridge the gap with organized labor and the middle class? And more important, how could he get the even split he needed in the Jewish community which boasted more than a million registered voters? For John Lindsay in 1969, Albert Shanker could be the great spoiler or the grand prize. If a detente could somehow be arranged with the powerful UFT, the mayor would be achieving a triple victory. First, it would provide concrete evidence that the school wars which had torn the city apart were finally over. Second, by negotiating a great teachers' contract he would be signaling the mighty labor federation of his willingness to discontinue his crusade to reform the city at the expense of the unionized white working class. And finally, a positive gesture from Shanker would at least give him a fighting chance to recapture the Jewish vote that was essential for victory.

If there was any doubt about the UFT staying out of the mayoralty campaign it was removed when Mario Procaccino, the only conservative in a five-man race, emerged the winner of the bitterly fought Democratic party primary. Although the Central Labor Council (of which Shanker was a vice president) had endorsed its old friend Robert Wagner, who had served three terms as mayor before Lindsay, the UFT refrained from stating a preference. Bronx Congressman James Scheuer and author Norman Mailer, neither with the slightest chance of winning, both refused to bow out of the race. Bronx Borough President Herman Badillo, the first Puerto Rican to make a bid for the city's top post, saw his chances go down the drain as the party's liberal vote split four ways. Mario Procaccino was victorious with only 32 percent of the total 755,529 primary votes cast. Now he prevailed over a tattered and splintered party whose liberal wing refused to back the conservative nominee, and jumped instead to endorse the independent bid of John Lindsay who was now free from the shackles of the Republican party.

The Democratic primary had immense significance for the UFT. Robert Wagner, a middle of the roader, ran a disappointing second, 28,000 votes behind the winner and only 5,000 more than the fast closing Badillo. Had Wagner won, the UFT president would have been hard pressed to throw his union into the fray in support of the Democratic nominee. The former mayor had been a good friend of organized labor, a skillful politician, and a proven vote-getter with a broad base of support both within and outside of the party. Of all the Democratic hopefuls, he had by far the best chance to unseat the mayor. In a general election Wagner was sure to get most of the anti-Lindsay votes as well as the lion's share of those garnered by the other four Democratic candidates in the primary. With a Wagner ticket the Procaccino Democrats would have had little choice but to line up behind the former mayor and the party's reform wing would not have felt compelled to defect, as they did, to support Lindsay. But in 1969 New York's Democrats were voting with their hearts, not with their minds. They chose a conservative who was to give the election away, over a moderate who couldn't have lost.

The decentralization campaign in Albany had brought Shanker into an extremely close alliance with the city's Democratic regulars. He had especially high praise for assembly minority leader Stanley Steingut of Brooklyn, whom he credited with shaping the compromise decentralization bill. In view of his growing ties with the party organization, it would have been difficult for Shanker not to call for a union endorsement of a promising Wagner candidacy. But the selection of Mario Procaccino as the party's standard bearer made it easy for the UFT president to play it safe while paving the way for a Lindsay victory. The comptroller, a decent man, had been tagged with the racist label. His straight law-and-order campaign had driven an estimated 90 percent of the black vote from him. With that constituency convinced that Procaccino was too far right, there was never a chance of the UFT coming out for him. To have supported the Democratic nominee would have created the image in the black community of a conspiracy between the teachers and the most conservative elements in town. Such an endorsment would have done irreparable harm to the union's program of rebuilding its bridges in those communities, bridges it needed in order to survive, it believed.

Complicating the union's position and strongly influencing it was the fact that the organization was about to undergo profound internal changes that would drastically alter its complexion. In 1967 the school board had introduced into the system a new employee category, that of paraprofessional. As a response to the criticism that only 6 percent of the staff was black, the new paraprofessional post was created to bring minority-group parents into the schools as part-time salaried employees assisting teachers in classroom duties. By 1969 there were about 13,000 such employees in this job classification, practically all black and Puerto Rican, most being paid out of federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title I) funds and state Urban Education allocations to the school districts in designated poverty areas. Working from two to four hours a day, they held a variety of titles: educational assistant, family worker, teacher aide, and family assistant, to name a few. Bringing this new group of employees into the union fold was a major challenge for the UFT, one that became a top union priority in 1969. The union leadership, conscious of the fears of large numbers of grade school teachers, embarked on a major organizational policy change almost without the knowledge of the membership. In November, 1967, Shanker quietly slipped a resolution through the administrative committee (AdCom) and the executive board authorizing the union to begin organizing this new pedagogical group and to try to become the collective bargaining agent for it.

By the spring of 1969 the UFT had committed its total resources to win a collective bargaining election against District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees for the right to represent these workers. For Shanker and the union leadership this was understood as a life or death struggle. It was the one hope to build a base of power in the ghettos where local residents would identify with teachers and the union, and fight side by side with it for their own personal aggrandizement as well as for a better school system. It was to be the basis of the alliance Shanker had set as the first order of business for the UFT. The campaign itself was a hard fought and dirty one, with the opposition charging that the UFT was out to exploit the helpless black parents. A defeat for the UFT was certain to mean years of intraschool feuding between the union's chapters and those of the insurgent paraprofessionals. Teachers were bound to see the new employees and their union as a challenge to themselves, infringing on UFT prerogatives. Few people understood the immense significance of this election, and while the attention of the general membership and the public was focused on the legislative scene in Albany where the school decentralization issue was being debated, and on the mayoralty primaries within both parties, a highly selective UFT leadership committee was pulling out all the stops to win an election to determine which union would represent this large bloc of school employees.

With the UFT spending huge sums of money scrapping for the votes of black paraprofessionals, it would not endorse Mario Procaccino any more than it would squarely confront the racial crisis at Lane High School. Victor Gottbaum, executive director of the opposing union, had already given the mayor the District Council 37 endorsement. For the UFT to come out for Procaccino now would mean alienating untold numbers of paraprofessionals whose votes were so badly needed in this interunion contest. The June collective bargaining election was indecisive, and it appeared as if the paraprofessionals would have to vote all over again in the fall. It was not until a week after the people of New York had given John Lindsay another four-year lease on Gracie Mansion that the UFT was finally declared the official winner in the paraprofessional vote.

In spite of the fact that an overwhelming majority of the union's 60,000 members were violently anti-Lindsay, Shanker embarked upon his own personal campaign to keep the union from coming out against the mayor. That he was able to nullify the tremendous antagonism teachers felt toward Lindsay is the most eloquent testimony to Albert Shanker's great leadership skills. He went to all the power bases of the organization . . . to the executive board and the delegate assembly, to the district representatives, to the chapter chairmen, and even to the membership itself. Always his message was the same: The union can only hurt itself by supporting one of the three candidates, he told them. All three have done some good for the union, the story went. Procaccino, as the comptroller, had gotten our paychecks released to us when Galamison tried holding them back at a crucial point during the strike, and the Democratic nominee had taken a firm stand against adult agitators who were taking over schools by force.

But how about John Marchi? the UFT leader would continue. The Republican candidate from Staten Island had been a great UFT supporter on school decentralization and we owed him a debt for having steered that 1968 interim bill and giving us a year's breathing spell to marshal our forces for the final battle against "community control."

And then there was Lindsay! As much as we detest the actions he took during the strikes, isn't there evidence that he has learned his lesson? Shanker would ask. Just look at the great contract he gave us! And when the militants tried to take over a Bronx school this fall, didn't he step right in and come to the defense of the embattled principal and staff? But of course. This isn't the same John Lindsay, and now there was even an open line between the UFT and City Hall.

But that alone would not have done the trick. Hatred of the mayor ran too deep. It was Shanker's ingenious play on teachers' fears that made him so convincing. It was the negative aspects of his argumentation that won the day. The union president went as far as to suggest that if we went against Marchi (who never stood a chance) the powerful state senator would be angry and could go back to Albany next January and sabotage the entire pension package we had just negotiated with the board but which was still subject to legislative approval. And as the Procaccino campaign turned into a fiasco, Shanker could argue about what a sad position we would be in if we supported the Democratic candidate and Lindsay was returned to office. Skillful, crafty, intimidating in his brilliance, he could convince the most hard-bitten Lindsay hater that the union should stay out of the campaign. They were all urged, instead, to go out and campaign as hard as they could for Marchi, or for Procaccino, or even for Lindsay (as some actually did). By having teachers working for all three candidates, Shanker reasoned, we would be for everyone and against no one. It was the best possible hedge, and we had to end up on the winning side! It was simple. It was direct. And it worked. Who could argue with the union president? Hadn't he himself been locked in mortal combat with the mayor and suffered more than anyone during those two disastrous strikes? And how could anyone challenge his judgment after the way he stood up and fought for teachers' rights in Ocean Hill and in Albany? If Shanker says stay out, he must know what he is talking about! There would be no UFT endorsement in 1969.

Through Sally Bowles, the mayor's liaison on education affairs, an open wire was maintained between City Hall and Shanker's office as the first reports of the Lane riot came over the radio on October 31, four days before the election.

The conflict over the flag had ended on October 24 and conditions in room 248 were getting back to normal, on the surface at least. But the residue of resentment, among the militants especially, resulted in a week of unimaginable tension and disruption. When the bell rang ending each class period, large numbers of black students, seventy-five to a hundred at least, made a mad dash into the school auditorium which was still being used as a study hall. Cutting their classes they mingled with the general body of students assigned there. It had become a den of intrigue, and in spite of the presence of policemen in the large hall no white student and few teachers dared enter the militants' lair. Open defiance of all forms of school authority and destruction of school property was the next phase of the confrontation that had begun in room 248 and expanded to a schoolwide demonstration march the week before. But even as the UFT chapter was passing its forward-looking statement on October 27, the arsonists, the extortionists, and the terrorists had stepped up their level of activity. Attacks on whites resumed with a vengeance as conditions went from bad to worst. In one incident a policeman apprehended a black girl who had been accused of stealing a pocketbook. A mob of boys immediately attacked him from the rear, forcing the officer to release her. The cry of police brutality resounded through the halls, and even the policemen felt their powerlessness. The presence of forty to fifty police officers could not prevent a lesser number of militant students from doing precisely what they had set out to do: bring education at Lane to a grinding halt. The militants were in the thick of it, directing barrage after barrage, giving fiery speeches wherever large numbers of students congregated. But there were few attempts to remove them from the scene—only a limited number of five-day suspensions—or to hold them accountable for the polarization they were creating.

On Friday, October 31, the leaders who had been suspended for five days for leading the rampage over the flag were returned to school. The decision had been made not to refer their cases to the high school superintendent (Jacob Zack), a move that would have kept them out of school pending an administrative decision by Livingston Street. The return of the leaders was a signal, and it climaxed a week of unbelievable terror. It started with a fight in the cafeteria between a white youth and a black one. The incident touched off several more racially motivated attacks of blacks against whites, many involving girls. The police finally moved in at Selub's request to clear out the cafeteria, for the principal had decided to dismiss school shortly after noon. The school was falling apart. Students and teachers were running about, and there was panic everywhere as angry blacks were ushered out of the cafereria and moved on to Dexter Court through the side entrances. Some proceeded to the Elderts Lane elevated train station a hundred yards down the street along Jamaica Avenue. But most just huddled together in groups, openly defying the police who were directing them away from the building. The scene elicited memories of radical leftists clashing with Chicago police at the Democratic convention a year earlier. But the New York City Police Department had trained its officers well in the techniques of riot control. Disregarding the taunts of hotheaded youngsters who were being spurred on by the militants, the police kept their cool and with the most remarkable restraint guided the crowd slowly down the street toward Jamaica Avenue. Rocks and other objects had been hurled at them but the police were not detracted from their primary goal of maintaining order. But suddenly, from the elevated train station high above Jamaica Avenue, came a flurry of stones, garbage, and other debris hurled down on the crowd below. Soon there was pandemonium. Students attacking police, the officers fighting back with nightsticks and fists. Then a wild breakout along the avenue and into Woodhaven. Turning over garbage cans and breaking windows along their route, bands of black youths held the neighborhood in a state of siege. At the train station the fighting continued.

In the melee several black youths were hurled through the plate glass window of a supermarket. When it was all over ten youths were arrested and a number of others reported injured. Students weren't the only casualties; two policemen suffered cuts and bruises. Few people realized how close the riot came to ending in a literal massacre. Roving bands of black youths had chased after white students in the streets of Woodhaven and Cypress Hills. Several of the whites, even before the riot erupted, had gone home to get their rifles. It wasn't until the next week that the staff learned of several shooting incidents in which white youths had fired over the heads of onrushing blacks, turning them around.

Quickly a call was put through to the union president by the chapter leaders, describing the events which at the very moment were being witnessed by newspaper men and filmed by television camera crews who were standing by outside the school in expectation of some kind of explosion. That evening television viewers saw in their own homes the naked horrors of a race war in a school.

The chapter message to Albert Shanker was short. Baumann, Altomare, and I would be there in an hour. Something had to be done! Ed Johnson, Baumann's cochairman, stayed behind to represent the union at a hastily called faculty conference; a conference which saw Selub, drained by nervous exhaustion, faint at the microphone in the middle of an address to the staff. High School Superintendent Jacob Zack, who had rushed to the school, tried to fill in for the stricken principal but received a shabby reception from an angry faculty. Baumann and Johnson had, in the meantime, agreed to announce a call for a job action unless there was movement by the administration to relieve the untenable situation. It was 1968 all over again. Students and teachers were paying dearly for the neglect of the school by the educational bureaucracy.

Albert Shanker had spent the better part of the afternoon on the phone with the mayor, Sally Bowles, Monserrat, and Acting School Superintendent Nathan Brown, elevated to the top post as a temporary replacement for Bernard Donovan, who had retired. In addition to sending out a press release calling for an immediate meeting with the mayor (the mayor had simultaneously invited the board and the union to Gracie Mansion for an emergency conference), Shanker had scheduled a press conference at UFT headquarters for 4:00 P.M. He was making it look like the real thing. The Lane delegation met with the president for about twenty minutes immediately prior to the press conference. We couldn't keep going in this climate, we told him. Shanker had to take a hard line with the board and the mayor, we advised. The power of the union had to be brought to bear to get immediate and drastic changes for the school.

Shanker was quiet and noncommittal. He had learned to be a good listener, especially when he had already made up his mind about what course to follow. When he felt he had enough information to respond to the reporters' questions, he rose from his desk and signaled Dan Sanders. He was ready for the press. We followed Shanker into the adjoining conference room where the camera crews and reporters were waiting. The UFT chief was very much at home with the news people and was a master at responding to the most double-edged question. His nimble mind and uncanny sense of timing guaranteed his success at a press interview. Accentuating the gravity of the situation, which had become the number-one news item of the day, Shanker announced the scheduled emergency meeting at Gracie Mansion for that evening, but declined to reveal what position the union would assume.

After the press conference there appeared the first hint that the Lane crisis was about to be used to push some larger union aim. George Altomare and Dan Sanders engaged in a private discussion about how to take advantage of this opportunity to extract from the mayor a commitment for a special appropriation to hire security guards for all the city high schools. Eighty black and Puerto Rican parapolicemen had been employed in several schools on an experimental basis. They were a welcome relief for teachers who could no longer control hostile black students. During the recent round of negotiations the union had demanded that a minimum of eight security guards be placed in each of the ninety-one high schools. Even though this was a top high school demand it had died along with all the others that were barely introduced during the 1969 talks.

But Vice President Altomare was a persistent fellow and he had learned over the years that there was more than one way to skin a cat. On October 9 he steered a resolution through the UFT High School Committee, over which he presided, stating:

> That the UFT insist upon security guards for all high schools. The High School Committee further urges that UFT officers meet with the highest officials of the Mayor's office and the Board of Education, and that the UFT be consulted on the training program of the security guards . . .[8]

Now Altomare and Sanders were planning to use the Lane riot as a lever to force an expansion of the security guard program. I listened as they hatched their plot and formulated their strategy.

"You can't mean that you are going to use this meeting for something other than the Lane problem," I objected. "If there are going to be any deals made up there it's got to be in Lane's behalf," I insisted.

Sanders and Altomare stepped back, assuring me that Lane wouldn't be sold short, but that they were in a good position to get the security guards for the whole division, as well. Naively, I accepted their assurances, but my worst fears were borne out by what took place at the Gracie Mansion conference that evening. The union bosses never blinked in their sell-out of Lane High School. Little or nothing was accomplished for the school, while the citywide security guard program was to be more than doubled in only a few months. By March 1, 1970, there were an additional 100 guards on the payroll.

An outsider would never have known that a riot had taken place at Franklin K. Lane High School from the conversation in Albert Shanker's car on the drive uptown to the mayor's residence. The passengers, Altomare, Feldman, DeLeonardis, and UFT Welfare Fund Director Ray Lizza, talked about everything but the events at Lane and the meeting for which they were headed. As the sixth passenger, I was astounded by their seeming indifference and nonchalance. Their primary interest was in the mayoralty race and on that morning's straw poll which had left little doubt about the outcome of the election. The union leaders, all experienced and wise in the world of partisan politics, scorned the ineffectual campaign waged by Mario Procaccino, and referring to the Democratic candidate, somebody observed, "Mario would have found a way to lose even if he ran unopposed." They all marveled at the slick professional campaign the mayor had conducted; admitting to his mistakes (such as the extended school strike), implying that he would not make them again, and stressing the positive aspects of his first term. He was, the union chieftains were sure, on the verge of turning certain defeat into a stunning upset victory that would have far reaching political implications not only in New York but across the nation.

During the thirty-minute drive, bucking traffic on Third Avenue during a busy Friday evening rush hour, not a word was spoken about possible strategy, tactics, and aims the union would pursue. One had to wonder, even then, about the very purpose of the meeting which was the lead-off story on every radio and television news report that evening. Surely, if anything was ever to be attained to return Lane to the mainstream, this was the time for a commitment. The eyes of the entire city were on that majestic white structure on 88th Street where the town's number-one citizen resided. But even the radio in Albert Shanker's car was kept off, in complete disregard of what the newscasters were saying. Perhaps it didn't matter. Maybe it had all been decided in advance with the union giving the mayor a chance to steal the spotlight and Procaccino's thunder and letting some of the law and order magic rub off on him.

The gates to Gracie Mansion swung open and Shanker pulled his car up that familiar driveway just as he had done so many times in the past. The TV lights glared and microphones were jammed through the front window and up to his face.

"Mr. Shanker, is the union going to demand that Lane High School be closed down?" the newsmen asked. "Is there a chance the UFT will call a strike?"

The UFT president replied calmly, evading direct questions. A very terrible thing happened out there today and we're here because the mayor and the board and everybody else seems to be as concerned as we are about it, he told them. We want to find out just what they are willing to do to prevent it from happening again, and then he added the thought that the union had some of its own ideas about what should be done and that UFT proposals would be presented inside. It was all Shanker would say, and the city would have to wait to find out about the fate of Lane High School.

Deputy Mayor Robert Sweet greeted the UFT delegation and directed it to a first-floor waiting room. The mayor was upstairs conferring with school officials and would be ready soon. Within a few minutes the rest of the union hierarchy arrived: Vice Presidents Sol Levine, Morris Shapiro, and Abe Levine, Associate Legislative Representative Reuben Mitchell, and

Public Relations Director Sanders. Shanker left to confer with Sweet, the same Robert Sweet who had once told him, "I'll remind you to keep a civil tongue in your mouth while you are in the mayor's house!" But this was a different time and on this night it was the UFT president who held all the trump cards. How hard would he push the mayor, Sweet wondered. Inside the waiting room there was a nervous air, for none of the union officials were quite sure why they were there. The only point of consensus was that on the eve of an election the politics of the situation was such that the mayor would be willing to make extraordinary concessions if he could come out smelling like roses. There was much chatter, no one being able to speak for ten consecutive seconds without being interrupted by someone who disagreed or had a better idea to suggest. Still, no constructive direction relevant to the specific needs of Lane.

Shanker returned from his conversation with Sweet and advised that we play it by ear. Let's first find out what the mayor and the board have in mind before we put any of our ideas on the table, he counseled. It seemed an appropriate strategy, for openers.

Sweet came back a few minutes later to announce that the mayor was ready to begin the meeting. Up the winding flight of stairs the delegation moved, and into the large conference room which had been the scene of bitter feuds in the past. But on this night Albert Shanker stood in the doorway alongside John Lindsay and introduced the mayor to each member of the UFT delegation as they passed through. Lindsay's handshake was firm and friendly. Smiling, he extended his greetings. "Glad to meet you," or "Thank you for coming," and to those he recognized from past ordeals, "Nice to see you again."

The mayor presided at the head of a large conference table. Already seated to his right were the city's top school officials; Board of Education President Joseph Monserrat, Manhattan's board member Isaiah Robinson, Board Secretary Harry Siegel, High School Superintendent Jacob Zack, and the president of the 4,000-member School Supervisors' Association, Walter Degnan. At the opposite end of the table, across from the mayor, sat Acting Schools Superintendent Nathan Brown, now flanked on either side by Shanker and Altomare. The rest of the union delegation took their places on the other side of the table. Then came various Police Department officials and aides of the mayor. Sweet and Sally Bowles moved throughout the room, conferring intermittently with various participants.

The tone of the meeting was solemn, but its purpose was soon clearly defined by the mayor. His opening remarks left no doubt that this was an assemblage of the family, called together to insulate the mayor and protect him from a possible political setback resulting from the Lane riot. What happened out there was terrible and intolerable, he told the conclave, and he went on to announce how one of his political opponents had already injected it into the campaign. That morning's *Daily News* straw poll had shown him eighteen percentage points ahead of Procaccino, and Shanker, always the master of the timely quip, interjected, "You mean you still have political opponents?" It broke the ice. Everybody laughed, including Lindsay. But he wasn't taking any chances on the polls. He was extremely annoyed that the radio stations had been giving the Lane riot what he called the "drip-drop" treatment, something coming over every five minutes as if nothing else had happened in town all day.

After announcing that Police Commissioner Howard Leary was unable to attend because of a pressing commitment elsewhere, he turned to Deputy Commissioner John Walsh and asked for a police report. The official police version was a fantasy, grossly understating what had actually taken place and conflicting with the films which had been shown on the evening news programs. It omitted, too, the horrors that teachers and policemen had witnessed inside the school. Altomare quickly challenged the accuracy of the police report, giving his own version of what happened. Lindsay squirmed in his chair. How would it look for the union to make liars out of his own police chiefs? Walsh backtracked, explaining that his report was merely a hasty condensation of all the information that had been channeled up from the precinct and divisonal levels. If there were omissions or discrepancies he would surely check it out before the night was over.

Jim Baumann leaned over toward me and whispered, "Harold, I smell a rat. They're going for a whitewash."

The Lane chairman rose from his seat. "Mr. Mayor," he began . . .

"Who is that?" Monserrat wanted to know.

The board president was making his presence known. He wasn't about to let the mayor usurp prerogatives that were his, and he was making it clear that he, not the mayor, was running the school system.

Shanker identified Jim Baumann as the school's chapter chairman. Twenty-five years old and new to his leadership role, Baumann was the only person in the room who had as his primary concern the safety of Lane's students and teachers and the viability of the school. Baumann was not their kind, and they all knew it as he described in an honest and forthright manner the gory details of what he had seen that day; "pools of blood spilled on the stairs," and going into the office of the girls' dean and seeing six or seven white girls crying hysterically, their hair disheveled and blouses ripped, several with blood streaming down their faces.

Now everyone was feeling less comfortable, especially the mayor. If this kind of talk ever got out to the newsmen upstairs, the whole purpose of the meeting would blow up in the mayor's face. Shanker sensed the uneasiness and quickly came to Lindsay's rescue. Everyone is upset about what happened, he counseled, but it doesn't do any good to dwell on the past. Let's talk about the future and see what can be done to make sure it doesn't happen again, he suggested. The union president had changed the line of discussion, taking the mayor off the hook momentarily and passing the ball to the school officials who had yet to be heard from.

Somebody suggested that the school be temporarily closed for a cooling off period, but Monserrat left no doubt where he stood on the question of closing schools. He would have none of it. The board president was completely opposed to closing a school in the face of student violence, explaining that such action was tantamount to capitulation and would be interpreted by the disrupters as a signal of their victory. It would also lead to the spread of violence to other schools. No, Lane must stay open, he ordered. Closing the school was one of the points the chapter had recommended to Shanker, but it was apparent that the solution had to be found elsewhere.

Attention shifted from Lane to the general citywide high school picture as Altomare steered the discussion to the need for an immediate expansion of the security guard program. He was looking for a commitment from the mayor to allocate funds earmarked for the security guard program. Shanker let the high school vice president play his cards, and Altomare came on strong, pushing for the expansion. Monserrat indicated he would be willing to expand the program if he had the funds but that he wouldn't cut back on some other program to do it. Lindsay allowed the discussion to meander around the security guard idea for a while, but soon he grew impatient. There were newsmen out there and a city was waiting. What about Lane? After all, he had assembled the top union and school officials to help him out of a political jam, and he wasn't going to get hung up on a budgetary matter. Returning to the Lane issue, Nathan Brown caught the mayor off guard by suggesting that the police be removed from the school.

"Nat, you can't mean for us to take the police out after what happened there today," the mayor responded, surprised by Brown's suggestion. The acting superintendent of schools hadn't been thinking of the political implications to which the mayor was most sensitive at this particular juncture. Brown, feeling a bit foolish over his faux pas, backed off and reshuffled his thoughts.

Nathan Brown had two immediate concerns. First, he was out for the newly created post of chancellor, the top administrative job in the new decentralized setup. (He announced his resignation from the school system three months later when he became convinced he would not be awarded the top post by the school board.) At the same time the acting superintendent felt a direct responsibility for the renewed violence at Lane. Earlier in the meeting I had risen to direct my remarks toward the failure to learn from last year's violence, revealing how Brown himself had rejected our plea for a breathing spell and had, in fact, ordered the school's return to a multiple-session ten-period day from the single session under which it had operated in the spring of 1969.

"If only you had listened to us last spring," I said, "and kept the incoming class down to a reasonable number, we could have stayed on a single session and begun addressing ourselves to some of the problems. We predicted this would happen again unless the school was given significant and speedy relief."

Now it was all out in the open. Brown's face reddened, a sneer came to his lips, and in striking back his gut feelings came through. Lane's problems, the superintendent countered, stem from an ultraconservative white community and a quasipolitical neighborhood group which is not comprised of parents of Lane students. These people don't want black kids in the school, he argued, and they are constantly stirring up trouble. Brown, in defending himself, was also making points with Monserrat, a Puerto Rican, and Robinson, a Negro, telling them exactly what they wanted to hear, playing on their own prejudices and political leanings. The mayor didn't have to be told about the politicos of Cypress Hills. He was all too familiar with them. He knew it was the spawning ground of Vito Battista, the local assemblyman who earlier in the year had been a declared candidate opposing Lindsay in the Republican primary. To avoid splitting the conservative vote, Battista finally stepped aside, taking the comptroller spot on the Marchi slate and paving the way for the Staten Islander to defeat Lindsay in the primary. And the very beginnings of that defeat were conceived in Cypress Hills when Joe Galliani converted his 38th Assembly District Independent Club into a Dump Lindsay headquarters, a movement that caught on in Republican circles and ended up with the mayor being denied his own party's support in the general election. John Lindsay, like Nathan Brown, had nothing but contempt for Cypress Hills and there was no reason to expect that he would come rushing to its assistance.

Morton Selub made his entrance about thirty minutes after the meeting had started. Neither Brown nor Zack had invited him to participate in the conference. Selub had learned about the emergency session from a radio broadcast and, angered at what he considered to be an inexcusable slight, decided to attend on his own volition. He took a seat next to Walter Degnan and when it was his turn to speak, his opening comment was, "I don't often agree with Harold Saltzman, but in this instance . . ." Brown was livid. It was absolutely unheard of for a principal to hold his superiors up to criticism, but Selub had decided that he was not going to be the scapegoat. He knew too much, and they weren't going to throw him onto the scrap heap as they had done to so many other principals when it was expedient. There already was an impressive list of principals who had been kicked upstairs, talked into early retirement, or granted emergency sick leave with pay when public attention was directed as difficulties in their schools. Selub was still a probationary principal with another year to serve before the decision about his tenure was made. The blacks as well as the whites had been screaming for his head since the January burning incident, but he wasn't about to let himself get dumped without a fight. He made that perfectly clear by his uninvited presence that evening. Selub wasn't going to be anybody's fall guy.

The first hour passed rather quickly. The mayor, while agreeing that the board had the authority to set school policy, intimated that if he was asked for special funds for a security guard program, such a request would be given immediate attention. But, he emphasized, that request had to come from the board, not the union. Now it was up to Monserrat. A simple request appeared to be all that was standing in the way of a happy ending for Lindsay. But the board president surprised everyone by getting perturbed about what he considered to be a negotiating session. That's not what he had come here for, he announced, rather annoyed at the course the meeting had taken. He would not discuss the matter further. If Al Shanker wanted to come to his office on Monday to talk about school security, fine . . . but not here!

Monserrat surprised the other participants with his emphasis on protocol. Now there was an impasse and Robert Sweet, recognizing the problem, suggested a short recess during which the groups could caucus. Nobody was quite sure about what was going on across the table, or under it, except that the mayor's plan of walking out of there arm in arm with the union and board presidents was not working out quite the way he had hoped.

The UFT delegation returned to its waiting room and caucused. Shanker, who had spoken very little at the conference, now took full command of the union forces, which up to then had been free-wheeling and somewhat undisciplined at the table. He felt the union was getting nowhere by pressuring Monserrat, a proud man, in the mayor's presence. The board president, Shanker observed, didn't want to negotiate in front of the whole world. Also, there was no point, he felt, in trying to hold a gun to Lindsay's head, because even if we threatened to knock him publicly it wouldn't have any effect on the outcome of the election. He was a winner and we would have to deal with him for another four years. But the tip-off on the Lane sell-out came from Sandra Feldman, Shanker's right arm, who had swallowed Nat Brown's story hook, line, and sinker, and was telling Shanker: "Al, those kids [the blacks] have a right to go to that school."

Lindsay and Monserrat were caucusing too, Shanker reminded his subordinates, and suggested that they were getting their signals straight behind the scenes. Soon Robert Sweet came down and called Shanker out into the corridor, bringing word of the goings-on upstairs. Shanker returned moments later with the news. Monserrat was in accord with the union's security guard proposals and he would meet with Shanker the following week to work out the details and to take a closer look at the Lane problem. In the meantime the school would reopen on Monday under heavy police guard and High School Superintendent Zack would be at the school to meet with Selub and the chapter representatives to make changes and provide for the tightest security. But there was no indication as to *what* changes the board would consider, nor was there any commitment from anyone about a specific program of reforming the school, as had been proposed by the Lane chapter on October 27. Nobody in the UFT delegation questioned the terms of the verbal understanding. The other union officials had only come along as window dressing. Shanker had upped his credit rating with City Hall and Altomare had gotten his security guards for the high schools. Instead of standing up to object to what was clearly a sell-out of the Lane chapter, I, like the rest, went along. And Jim Baumann, in way over his head with the union bigwigs, didn't want to be the lone unpopular voice. The chance to save Lane had slipped through our fingers.

When the conference was reconvened upstairs, all the creases had been ironed out. Lindsay, Monserrat, and Shanker all reiterated what had been agreed to through Sweet, and in five minutes it was over. Now all that remained was for them to go up to the press room and announce their unanimity about the solutions to Lane's problems.

Each in turn appeared before the television cameras and gave substantially the same speech, emphasizing their unity and cooperative spirit.

Now all John Lindsay had to do was keep enough police at the school for a single day, November 3, and he would be returned to office for a second term.

For the parents, students, and teachers of Franklin K. Lane, the future was hardly as bright.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1969.
2. *Long Island Press*, Oct. 24, 1969.
3. *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1969.
4. Lane UFT chapter resolution, Oct. 27, 1969.
5. Letter to Mayor John Lindsay from UFT chairmen James Baumann and Edward Johnson, Oct. 28, 1969.
6. Press release from UFT central headquarters, Oct. 31, 1969.
7. *United Teacher*, May 25, 1969.
8. Minutes, UFT High School Committee, Oct. 9, 1969.

Chapter 6

Union Politics and Postmortems

If John Lindsay's future was to be found at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., Albert Shanker's was at 815 16th Street N.W., the headquarters of the AFL-CIO in the nation's capital. In 1969 the UFT president, head of the largest local union in America, narrowly missed election to George Meany's AFL-CIO executive council. He wouldn't miss the next time around. At the age of forty-one his future seemed boundless. Like everything else in America the nation's labor movement was undergoing rapid change. Its white-face and blue-collar configuration was being modified as increasing numbers of black laborers, white-collar employees, and government workers were being unionized. As the 1960s brought an influx of office workers and municipal employees into the ranks of organized labor, Albert Shanker was viewed by many as the one leader most capable of speaking for and to this newly emerging constituency within the labor movement: the blacks, the professionals, the white-collar workers, and the employees in the public sector. He was president of a local which by 1970 had a membership in excess of 56,000, the largest in the nation, and was about to add another 10,000 black and Puerto Rican employees who had been recruited into the New York City school system as paraprofessionals—community people hired to assist teachers in the classroom.

Just as organized labor had seen its own future tied up in an alliance with the national civil rights movement, the New York teachers union had ordered as its first priority a rebuilding of the coalition it had formed with the city's minority groups—a coalition that had been all but permanently destroyed by the Great School Strike of 1968. That number-one UFT priority was to operate, in 1969, to the detriment of high school teachers in general, and of those of Franklin K. Lane in particular.

The 1968 school strike had elevated Shanker to a position of national prominence. Labor unions all over the country recognized the implications of the Ocean Hill style of community control, and realizing that the UFT was fighting only the first phase of a battle that might ultimately come to them, they were quite willing to contribute the $220,000 George Meany had called for to pay the fine that would certainly be imposed against the teachers union for its illegal strike. (The New York State Taylor Law specifically prohibited strikes by public employees.)

Shanker's stock rose even higher a year later when he made a gigantic $60,000 contribution to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers during the extended General Electric strike. And he won unprecedented prestige among old-line labor men with the UFT's nationally distributed pro-IBEW lesson plans designed for use in classrooms in teaching about the General Electric strike. Albert Shanker was slowly bringing his union out of the snobbish provincialism that had traditionally kept it aloof from the working class and was steering it into the mainstream of the American labor movement. This virtually guaranteed his election to the AFL-CIO executive council the next time around.

David Selden, president of the 190,000-member parent body, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), would normally have been the choice for the AFL-CIO slot, but he was in no position to stand in Shanker's way. The New York local, with its 60,000 members, represented almost a third of the AFT's total membership. While Selden was one of Shanker's closest friends, he knew where the national's base of power was located. New York's giant local was the heart of the national body and Albert Shanker was the power behind the throne. It was something Dave Selden could never forget, not for a moment, even as he rubbed shoulders with the highest officialdom of government in Washington, D.C.

Selden and Shanker had been joined by George Altomare in the 1950s to form the triumvirate that gave the American Federation of Teachers its very first local union with collective bargaining rights. In the late fifties and early sixties, the Selden-Shanker-Altomare combination made the teachers union in New York City.

George Altomare began his teaching career as a social studies instructor in a Queens County junior high school after his graduation from the City College of New York in 1953. The degradation to which teachers were subjected by an educational system based on caste pushed Altomare into the union movement. It had been the traditional policy of the city school board to keep teachers divided by cultivating differences among them and by playing off the many different teacher organizations against each other. By pitting group against group, division against division, the school board had been successful in preventing the formation of any one single professional organization that could speak for all the system's employees. The net result was that teachers were among the poorest-paid employees in New York. (In 1958 the starting salary was $4,000 a year.) In 1953 Altomare found himself on the same faculty with Albert Shanker, Sol Levine (future UFT vice president), and Dan Sanders (eventual UFT public relations director) at JHS 126 in Queens. There, in opposition to what they viewed as a tyrannical administration, they formed a militant chapter of the New York City Teachers' Guild, the forerunner of the United Federation of Teachers.

Shanker and Altomare, both in their mid-twenties, made it to the executive board of the 3,000-member guild and injected new life into the organization. By 1956 Shanker was organizing full time for the guild as a special representative employed by the national AFT, with Selden working for the guild as its full-time director of organization. But it was Altomare, who had moved on to a teaching post at Franklin K. Lane High School, who made the most outstanding contribution toward the achievement of a single unified teachers union in New York. The greatest obstacle to unity was the powerful High School Teachers Association (HSTA), which had consistently refused to merge with the guild. It was Altomare who ingeniously laid the foundation for a merger with a dissident group within the HSTA. Disagreements had been the normal order of things among elementary, junior high school, and senior high school teachers. The latter group earned a higher salary because they were required to show more college credits than teachers in the other divisions. The guild, whose limited strength was outside the high schools, had as one of its major policy positions a single salary schedule for all teachers. This was to be achieved by giving the lower grade teachers the opportunity to earn as much money as high school teachers if they produced the same number of college credits. The HSTA, on the other hand, demanded the maintenance of the salary and status differential based on the notion that high school teachers were a cut above their counterparts in the lower grades.

There had been numerous meetings between guild and HSTA officials between 1956 and 1959 aimed at merger, but high school teachers rebuffed their own leadership each time HSTA officials broached the subject of merger and parity. The first opportunity for a breakthrough came in 1959. A group of high school teachers who worked in the city's sixteen evening high schools to supplement their day school income, voted to strike the evening schools. It was the first time any group of New York City school employees dared challenge the state's Condon-Wadlin Law which called for the dismissal of striking teachers. The strike of the evening school teachers was a landmark, a huge success resulting in salary gains approaching 100 percent. But more importantly it brought together guild and

HSTA activists on the picket lines for the first time, both ardently supporting the strike of the independent evening school teachers. That 1959 strike was a watershed, proving first that people from the rival organizations could work together, and second, that in unity New York City's teachers could make great strides forward.

The evening teachers strike set the stage for new secret merger talks between Altomare and the HSTA dissidents with whom he had worked and who also wanted a single united organization. It was Altomare's great triumph, and both Selden and Shanker took a back seat to the young high school teacher. Endowed with great talents of diplomacy and personal persuasion, he manipulated the older and more experienced HSTA leaders. Even the guild president, Charles Cogen, watched in amazement as Altomare wheeled and dealed, breaking the HSTA leadership apart. By fomenting dissension from within their ranks he brought enough HSTA dissidents into secondary positions of leadership within the guild to give the impression that a bona fide merger had been accomplished. It had a snowball effect, as more high school teachers came over until the legitimate HSTA officials had no choice but to go along. George Altomare, almost single-handedly, achieved a minor miracle. By 1960 the newly created United Federation of Teachers was petitioning the school board for a collective bargaining election to determine which organization would have exclusive rights to bargain for and represent all the city's teachers.

Altomare's star was about to reach its zenith. He had been strike chairman for the guild in addition to being a member of its executive board. In the 1960 post-merger election he won the position of assistant treasurer, and in 1961 he was elected vice president for the academic high schools, a post he retained for the entire decade of the sixties except for a two and one-half year stint as a full-time UFT organizer. In the meantime Albert Shanker had continued to work for and advise the newly created union as a full-time AFT staffer. But in 1962 he plunged into the organization's political maze, running for and winning the post of secretary on the ticket headed by union president Charles Cogen. Slates headed by Cogen, Shanker, and Altomare went on to outpoll oppositon tickets for practically all officer and executive board positions and the Unity caucus soon emerged as the most powerful and broadly based party in the union. In 1962 the UFT leadership negotiated its first contract —the first ever for a teacher organization anywhere in the nation—and they were on their way. They had called two strikes, each for a one-day duration. The first one took place in 1960 to force a collective bargaining election that the board was trying to put off, and another one-day stoppage in 1962 pressed home the union's negotiating demands. By 1963 it was a well-established organization with the fastest growing membership in the labor movement.

The UFT successfully negotiated its first contract in 1962 and a new two-year agreement was ratified in 1963. Charles Cogen, president of the guild since 1952, had the grandfather image necessary to win teacher confidence and public support for the struggling new union in the early sixties. But Cogen, an eminently decent person, never had the ruthless amibtion or political savvy to consolidate his hold on the top spot, and by 1964 his ability to control and direct the leadership of the rapidly growing local was questionable. And after having been the brains behind the power for eight years Albert Shanker was getting impatient. In 1964 the Selden-Shanker-Altomare triumvirate mapped out the future of the New York local as well as that of the parent national body. Cogen would be eased out and replaced by Shanker as the Unity candidate in the 1964 union general election. That summer they would put Cogen forth as the Progressive candidate for the AFT presidency, which until then had been controlled by Carl Megel of the more conservative Chicago local. If Cogen won, Selden would go with him as number-two man in the national organization and his likely successor.

It worked out precisely the way they planned it, for everyone except George Altomare. Most people thought in terms of a Shanker-Altomare ticket in 1964, with the high school vice president running for secretary, the number-two spot on the slate. It was a natural. Shanker and Altomare were contemporaries. They had begun their teaching careers together at the same junior high school in Queens. Holding similar sociopolitical views they were a highly compatible team and in those early years of union activism they developed a close friendship. Altomare recognized and respected Shanker's gifted intellect, and Shanker acknowledged the organizing prowess and charismatic personality that enabled Altomare to draw hundreds of teachers to do volunteer work for the fledgling union. Never could Shanker, having yet to develop the necessary social maturity, hope to hold the personal loyalties that the more gregarious Altomare commanded as the UFT network chairman—a post which kept him in constant contact with the union's school-based grass-roots leadership.

Altomare was bitterly disappointed in 1964 when Shanker chose an old-timer, Jules Kolodny, over him for the second spot on the ticket. But he consoled himself with a reasonably certain feeling that after the AFT election Shanker would tab him for the post of director of organization, which Dave Selden would vacate in moving up to the AFT leadership with Cogen. There were many who thought, in 1964, that George Altomare should have been the Unity candidate for president, ahead of Shanker. After all, it was Altomare who had engineered the great merger, Altomare whose organizing skills had put together a successful network, and Altomare, as the chief architect of two highly successful and painless strikes, who held the loyalties that could put him over. But the high school vice president never thought of challenging Shanker for the top job, and at Shanker's request he even stepped aside for Kolodny. For George Altomare it was the beginning of a long downward slide. The Shanker-Kolodny ticket was victorious in 1964 (as it was in 1966, 1968, and 1970) and that summer it was Altomare and Selden who personally engineered the Cogen insurgency at the AFT Convention in Chicago.

Now George Altomare waited for his promotion to that prized spot, organization director. But that reward never came, for Shanker, in a shrewd and calculated political maneuver, swung his support in the administrative committee to John O'Neill, a former guild organizer and junior high school vice president. For Altomare this was a stunning setback. As a ranking officer, chairman of the strike network, a loyal supporter and personal friend of the new president, he had expected Shanker's endorsement for the director job. All the years of complete devotion and self-sacrifice for the movement seemed wasted. He was shunned in favor of a man whose credentials were not nearly as imposing as his own. For almost eleven years he had toiled, teaching school until 3:00 P.M. and then rushing over to guild (later UFT) headquarters in Manhattan to work out the details of an organizational campaign, merger talks, or strike strategy. If in those formative years there was a single man in the movement who could be called indispensable, it surely would have to be George Altomare. But eleven years of laboring around the clock had taken its toll. A hardened union veteran at age thirty-three, he made the fateful decision to give up his vice presidency to take a lesser job as a full-time UFT organizer. It was a post well beneath his enormous stature, but he could no longer face the prospect of yet another year of coming to Lane early every morning to face students whom he no longer had the desire to teach, and then beginning his real work day at 4:00 P.M. at the union office—a day that rarely ended before the wee hours of the morning. By 1964 he was tired physically and emotionally spent, and the full-time organizing job was a straw. He grabbed it.

Altomare became a member of the full-time UFT staff in 1964 and although Shanker let him retain the network chairmanship he could never quite accept the automatic relegation to a non-policy making role. For Shanker, Altomare represented an internal threat—the man who was in constant communication with the union's grass-roots leaders. And every classroom teacher remembered Altomare as the man who was always in the forefront of their proudest victories. Conscious of having dropped Altomare in favor of Kolodny and then O'Neill, and of having cleverly manipulated him out of the political leadership, Shanker continued to whittle away at the former vice president's power and prestige. And Altomare, psychologically unable to accept his new nonpolitical role in the union he had helped found, often clashed with the new president who was anxious to establish his own power and image. The relationship between the two men became strained; neither was able or willing to respect the other's needs.

By 1967 Altomare decided to get back into politics and run for his old vice presidency. Shanker, realizing that he couldn't keep him out without splitting the caucus and paying too expensive a price, decided to support his comeback. Confident of Shanker's backing in the Unity primary, Altomare returned to Lane in February, 1967, to establish his credentials as a candidate in that spring's union election. The disruptive child issue which came to the fore in 1967 must be understood in the light of the union's internal politics generally, and more specifically in view of the Altomare resurgence. He had returned to Lane to find his old school in the grips of student disruption, unlike anything he had known prior to his leaving in 1964. He came back to Lane, his political future on the line, anxious for an issue that would propel him back into the limelight. Between 1959 and 1964 he had been Mr. Union, his name a household word among city teachers. But two and one-half years of being buried in the glamourless paperwork of the central office saw his prominence diminish. Now he faced a hard uphill battle in the Unity primary against the incumbent, Martin Lobenthal, and if successful, an even tougher fight in the general election against the strong opposition candidate, popular old-time Bronx militant, Ben Kaplan.

But the disruption at Lane gave Altomare an issue, and using the Lane chapter to spearhead a confrontation with District 19 Superintendent Margaret Douglas, he claimed public credit for a nebulous victory that Douglas never acknowledged—and later refuted. The disruptive child issue would become a key union demand in the coming round of negotiations.

Martin Lobenthal decided not to run as an independent, as he had threatened, after Altomare trounced him in the Unity primary. Had the incumbent vice president stayed in the race Kaplan might have emerged the winner, but in a two-man contest Altomare managed to eke out the narrowest of victories, a 180-vote margin—representing a difference of only three votes in each of the sixty academic high schools. He returned to the union in the fall of 1967 as a full-time vice president while the Lane chapter continued to struggle with the problem of student disruption. He had used his school to get elected, but now Lane was no longer among his major concerns. He had always been extremely sensitive about paying too much attention to the problems of his home school. A politician of the first order, he was ever fearful of the prospect of being criticized for doing too much for his own Franklin Lane.

Contributing to the neglect of Lane's problems was the fact that during the 1967–70 period the UFT had relegated the high schools to the lowest priority among the union's needs. The organization had commited itself to such programs as the More Effective Schools plan, which became a national program, sponsored by the AFT, to saturate ghetto schools with additional teaching services and personnel. Altomare, in a political box, sidestepped the major high school problems, and in accordance with his philosophy of avoiding controversy, allowed the high school problems to fester rather than fight to make the divisional difficulties an object of the union's action. It is paradoxical that what he had always sought to avoid, controversy, came upon him by his own doing just three months after he resumed his vice presidency. For Altomare the 1967 school strike had been a humiliating experience. He had always been part of the front-line negotiating team. Even as a staff representative he played a major role in the 1965 settlement. But 1967 was a different story. It was the first time New York teachers struck for more than one day. When the stoppage entered its third week, the scene moved to Gracie Mansion where night after night George Altomare found himself sleeping on an air mattress on the floor of a chilly waiting room while inside Shanker and Kolodny negotiated the terms of the settlement with Board President Giardino, Donovan, and Lindsay. This was the first time Altomare had been cut out of top-level bargaining and it was even more painful knowing that inside, his arch-enemy Kolodny, was negotiating away key high school demands he was certain could have been won.

For the first time in fourteen years of close personal and professional association, Altomare broke with Albert Shanker. Using as his excuse the claim that class size for non-college bound (black) students in the academic high schools might actually increase under the formula arrived at with the board, Altomare voted against the settlement terms in the negotiating committee. Joined by John O'Neill, who had given up the staff director's job to resume his post as junior high school vice president, and by Assistant Treasurer Richard Parrish, he led the fight against ratification in the executive board. It was a tense session, but after much emotional debate the body voted to sustain Shanker and approved the pact. George Altomare emerged from the executive session beaten, but not yet ready to give up his fight. Visibly shaken by the blood-letting inside the executive board room he headed for the TV cameras that were set up outside the meeting room in the lobby of the union's Park Avenue South headquarters. The newsmen sensed a division in the union's leadership and were hot on the trail of a breaking story. Altomare didn't let them down, He wasn't ready to give up . . . there was still the Delegate Assembly that evening, the third part of a four-step ratification procedure. In front of the grinding cameras he announced that the union's acceptance of the pact was a sell-out of both teachers and the black community. Now it was no longer an internal UFT matter. Shanker followed him, accusing the vice president of raising a phony issue and hailing the agreement as the best ever won by teachers anywhere. It was the kind of episode neither man would ever forget; one from which Altomare would never recover; and one for which Shanker would never forgive him.

It was all out in the open the night of September 28, 1967, at the Manhattan Center on West 34th Street as the union's 1,500 delegates gathered to see a live reenactment of the Shanker-Altomare feud they had seen on television earlier in the evening. They had come to choose their hero, and the mood of the delegates seemed clearly against the settlement terms. They cheered wildly as George Altomare made his way to the stage to deliver his minority report. But he was no match for Albert Shanker before a large body. The president described the contract as the best ever. He was magnificent and the most anti-Shanker elements had to admit that here was a truly gifted person. He sold them on the settlement . . . a settlement that was substantially the same as the one he had implored them to reject before the fourteen-day strike. By the time Altomare followed to present the minority report most of the delegates had already been swung over by Shanker's methodical argumentation. And then there was the fact that over the years Altomare's most glaring weakness had been his deficiency in public speaking. The high school vice president droned on for thirty minutes, going off on tangents, dealing in technicalities few of the delegates understood or cared about, and before he was halfway through most of the assemblage had tuned out.

In the end the delegates voted overwhelmingly to accept the terms of the new agreement, and it was all over for George Altomare. He had gambled, and lost, and he would now have to pay the heavy price for his opposition. The union president, angered at what he considered an inexcusable betrayal by the Altomare-led troika, began creating around himself a new top-level cabinet of trusted advisers outside the corps of elected officers. His newly assigned special assistant, Sandra Feldman, Staff Director DeLeonardis, and Sanders, his public relations chief, now became his most intimate confidants, to whom he turned for guidance on major policy questions. Joining his "kitchen cabinet" was Bayard Rustin, the noted black civil rights leader and executive director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Tom Kahn of the League for Industrial Democracy, and the Socialist author Michael Harrington. And within the official administrative committee of eleven UFT officers, Treasurer Wittes, Secretary Kolodny, and Elementary Schools Vice President Abe Levine served as the hatchet men, ostracizing the high school official and making it all but impossible for him to function.

The revolt over ratification was only the first of a series of Altomare-Shanker battles during the 1967–68 school year. The most violent split came over the AFL-CIO endorsement of the Johnson Administration's Vietnam policy. This was an issue of conscience to many on the fifty-one-member UFT executive board, and the lines were drawn to get the local and the parent AFT to disassociate themselves from the AFL-CIO's support of the nation's Vietnam policy. But Albert Shanker, firmly aligned with the AFL-CIO hawks on the war issue, knew that to bolt Meany on Vietnam would be to throw himself into the renegade camp of United Auto Workers-head Walter Reuther, and destroy his own hopes of climbing the ladder of the national labor movement, so he battled fiercely against the anti-war faction of his own executive board in New York, a faction that included in its leadership George Altomare and John O'Neill.

The clash between the two giants continued well into the spring of 1968. Preoccupied with his own internal nightmare, Altomare had little time for the crisis that was brewing in Franklin K. Lane. The thorny problems of overcrowding, of racial imbalance, of lawlessness and violence, continued to fester and grow. But Lane's problems were not only overshadowed by the Altomare-Shanker hassle but by the larger issues that had begun to engulf the union and the city. In addition to the Vietnam issue there was the emerging crisis over the dismissal of nineteen union teachers, without charges, by Rhody McCoy in the predominantly black Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration school district. With Lindsay abstaining and the school board vacillating and refusing to protect the job rights of the "transferred" teachers—McCoy insisted that the teachers were being legally transferred to the central board for reassignment elsewhere—the union called a mini-strike during the final six weeks of the school year shutting down all of the seven schools in the demonstration district. At the same time a battle was being waged in the halls of the state legislature pitting the UFT against the well-financed Ford Foundation-sponsored groups which were lobbying vigorously in behalf of the Bundy proposals for community control of the schools. The Bundy Plan would have dissolved the central board and fragmented the school system into scores of completely autonomous community districts based on race and ethnic background. The legislation, if passed, would have emasculated the union, rendering it helpless to protect the job rights and professional security of teachers. It was an issue that struck at the very lifeblood of labor leaders throughout the nation and it was little wonder that Van Arsdale of the Central Labor Council and Meany's AFL-CIO stood staunchly behind the UFT president in his struggle against Ocean Hill. At the same time political leaders throughout the state were shocked by the excesses of the new experimental district. Thanks to the efforts of State Senator John Marchi, an interim decentralization bill was passed which put off a final decision for another year. The law allowed the mayor to stack the school board with four new appointees while charging it with the task of coming back in one year with a final decentralization proposal. It was just what the UFT had wanted.

The problems at Lane seemed small indeed when compared to the fiery and emotion-laden issues of 1968 which were gaining national attention. The question of job security and the threat of teachers being tossed out of their positions at the whim of local black extremists was far more important than any immediate problem, however serious, at one particular school.

The Great School Strike in the fall of 1968 hit the city like a bomb. Locked in deadly struggle with John Lindsay and Rhody McCoy, Albert Shanker was in a position to demand absolute loyalty from his corps of officers and his executive board. This was something Junior High School Vice President O'Neill, opposing the strike from the beginning, was unwilling to give him. But this was not the time for internal division and Shanker seized the opportunity to go before his executive board charging O'Neill with having conspired to conduct private negotiations with McCoy and his Ocean Hill supporters, and of subverting the union's strike aims. As punishment, and to remove him from the scene once and for all, Shanker demanded the termination of O'Neill's full-time employment as a vice president and his banishment to regular classroom duties. (The following week the vice president was also removed from the negotiating committee.) But Shanker wasn't stopping with O'Neill. He hadn't forgotten Altomare's role in the 1967 strike or his part in the anti-war crusade on the executive board, or the high school vice president's disagreement with his own strike strategy in Ocean Hill. Arguing that the strike was placing the union in dire financial straits (it ended up more than $300,000 in the *black* for that fiscal period), Shanker cleverly coupled his purge of O'Neill with the claim that the union could no longer afford to pay the salaries of three full-time vice presidents. Elementary Schools VP Levine was retained, but O'Neill and Altomare would have to go, he insisted. There was no opposition to the ousters, except from O'Neill, who accused the president of creating a dictatorship, of stifling creative thought within the leadership, and of surrounding himself with "sycophants" as top advisers. From Altomare came not a whimper. Accepting his emasculation he returned to Lane, quietly, when the strike finally ended in late November. Shanker later went on to hire *six* additional special aides and presidential assistants at salaries equivalent to the $14,000 earned by the vice presidents. And the UFT leader had his own salary doubled, to $37,000 and later to $50,000, in addition to a Manhattan apartment and a new car on the union tab.

While the high schools were being torn apart from within by black militant students and assaulted from without by adult agitators, the UFT high school vice president was stripped of all authority to represent his constituency. First he was barred from making any public statement without authorization from Shanker's public relations man, Dan Sanders. Later, he was forbidden the long established privilege of sending out written communiques, minutes, and notices of divisional meetings to high school chapter chairmen and to members of the High School Committee, over which he now tenuously presided. His movements after 3:00 P.M., when he reported to the central UFT office, were carefully checked and sometimes directed by Feldman, DeLeonardis, and other Shanker aides. Even his secretary was placed in the general office pool, making it difficult, if not impossible, for her to conduct the simplest routines of Altomare's office. And most humiliating was the fact that high school matters that normally came under the purview of the high school vice president were given over to other officers and Shanker aides. George Altomare, in exile at Franklin K. Lane High School, had become a union vice president in name only.

But the high school vice president was by no means the only victim. Following the Altomare-O'Neill purge, Shanker moved deftly to root out any and all sources of dissent within the leadership and to establish his absolute personal control over the union. Within the ruling Unity Caucus he insisted on the removal of its anti-war chairman, Sol Levine, and replaced him with Jeannette DiLorenzo, a district representative and fiercely loyal Shankerite. Earlier, Shanker had fielded his own candidate, Fred Nauman, a caucus newcomer, to oppose Levine in the 1969 Unity primary and to run for the junior high school vice presidency, which had opened up with the ouster of John O'Neill. The UFT president was outraged when the caucus, voting in secret ballot, nominated the veteran Levine over Shanker's personal choice. (Nauman was later given the full-time job as director of the UFT College Scholarship Fund.)

The Levine victory in that bitter 1969 caucus primary convinced Shanker that the anti-war faction in the leadership had to be purged. With O'Neill already out, and with Altomare struggling to get back into Shanker's good graces, executive board members Sanford Gelernter and Martin Lobenthal became the new spokesmen for the anti-war faction. Along with Richard Parrish, UFT assistant treasurer and AFT vice president, the two executive board members were expunged from the Unity Caucus, ending long and distinguished careers in the teacher union movement. Even Reuben Mitchell, the venerable and much respected member of the Teachers Retirement Board, was ousted from the officer corps when Shanker decided that his post as associate legislative representative should be an appointive (by Shanker) rather than an elective one. Needless to say, Mitchell too was active in the anti-war push and had also disagreed with Shanker over certain specifics of the school decentralization bill. The Unity Caucus itself had swelled to over 400 members as more Shankerites were brought in to participate in the closed door political intrigue. But still burning over the Levine victory, Shanker quickly ended the traditional procedure of nomination by secret ballot and decreed that the caucus slate would instead be chosen by its nine-member steering committee, which, of course, had been handpicked by none other than Albert Shanker.

As "Clear it with Al" became the theme at the central UFT office, nobody was safe from the watchful eyes of the Shankerites. Even a group of UFT field representatives, members of the full-time professional staff, were provoked into a wildcat strike when they incurred Shanker's wrath by trying to organize the thirty-one district representatives who were just beginning to run the day-to-day UFT operation in the newly decentralized districts. Shanker, recognizing that from an internal political standpoint the loyalty of the thirty-one district representatives was essential for keeping the membership in line, refused to allow the Teachers Representatives Union (TRU) to organize the district representatives. When the UFT president suspended Vincent Speranza, a TRU activist trying to sign up the district representatives, for allegedly disobeying an order from Staff Director DeLeonardis three other TRU leaders called a strike. But Shanker had cleverly cultivated dissension in the TRU ranks by placing a number of his own aides in the bargaining unit. The result was that only the three leaders walked out in support of Speranza. Charles Loiacono, TRU president and a man Shanker feared as a possible challenger for the UFT leadership, Joseph Pacheco, and Edward Kochian were all immediately fired. The American Arbitration Association eventually ruled in Speranza's behalf but he refused to return from his teaching job in Staten Island and later accepted a key post with the National Education Association in Illinois. Loiacono and Pacheco returned to the classroom scene from where they organized a new UFT caucus, the Teachers Reform Party, hoping to unify the diverse elements in the union which opposed "Shankerism."

The Teachers Action Committee (TAC), composed primarily of the 1968 strikebreakers who favored "total community control" of the schools, the New Caucus, an anti-war group fashioned by Gelernter and Lobenthal, and Loiacono's Reform Party came together frequently during the early months of 1971. When it became evident that ideological differences and political distrust would not allow them to present a united front against Shanker in the upcoming union election, Loiacono's group closed shop. It was not to be heard from again. For the remaining opposition, the election itself was an exercise in futility. The practice of *slate voting* coupled with a monstrously large and complex ballot (even for teachers) produced another clean sweep for Unity as all its officers, executive board members, and 225 AFT delegates were swept in on Shanker's coattails. The UFT president crushed all the opposition, garnering 17,000 *slate* votes for his ticket against some 3,000 divided between the TAC and the New Caucus presidential candidates. In November, 1970, frustrated over Shanker's refusal to come to grips with the problem of school violence, I broke with him and established a dissident committee of about a thousand high school UFTers who shared my view that the terrible crisis must be made a top union priority. By running only for the ten high school posts in the union leadership we planned to focus attention on the problem of school disruption and hoped to make a strong enough showing in the election to force Shanker to move. But slate voting and the Shanker magic were obstacles too formidable to overcome, and our high school ticket won only 13 percent of the divisional vote in that 1971 election. While it was greater than the combined vote of the two opposing groups on the left, it wasn't nearly enough to convince Albert Shanker that teachers were unhappy with his do-nothing stance on school violence.

Meanwhile, the UFT president continued his march toward consolidating all union power in his hands. Virtually all the district representatives became Shankerites too, and just to make sure that their flirtation with TRU was over, the kitty was sweetened to the tune of $3,000 for each district representative, doubling his part-time salary to $6,000 per year. Now only the Delegate Assembly stood between Albert Shanker and the absolute power he coveted. The Delegate Assembly, the highest of the three deliberative bodies in the union, was the only one that had not been captured and spellbound by the Shanker mystique, nor been politicized by the Shankerites. Elected on the ratio of one delegate per ten union members in each school, the Delegate Assembly was composed of some 4,000 certified teacher-delegates. Even when only a thousand appeared for the monthly delegate meetings, Shanker found it difficult to control the assemblage in his customary highhanded manner. The Delegate Assembly had to be "reformed," he decided, and it was. Representation in the assembly was cut down to one per sixty teachers, reducing the number of certified delegates to about 1,200. Consequently, the 350 "activists" who continued to attend the assembly meetings were, for the most part, Shanker loyalists and Unity Caucus members. Those who weren't found themselves stifled and beaten down by the Shankerites. The Delegate Assembly of the 1960s, sometimes a raucous and unpredictable body, but always prestigious and exciting in the democratic tradition, gave way to a new breed of hero worshippers, turning it into a passive and lethargic body that accepted the leader's word as gospel and unhesitatingly rubber-stamped every measure he put before it.

In just two short years Albert Shanker had achieved absolute personal domination over the largest local union in America, a domination as stringent and as uncompromising as any ever exercised by an old-guard labor czar. On the surface the markings of a once truly democratic organization appeared to remain intact: the grass-roots committees, the weekly union newspaper, the publication of minutes of the deliberative bodies, and the union elections. But in the everyday operation of the UFT, in the nuts-and-bolts mechanics of the mighty federation, Albert Shanker had become the UFT and the UFT *was* Albert Shanker.

Altomare's return to Lane coincided with the upsurge of student unrest and racial upheaval that hit the school as part of the strike aftermath. Again he was in the forefront as his own school bore the brunt of the venom pouring out from nearby Ocean Hill, where adult agitators were using Lane's students to spearhead a drive to destroy the settlement terms as they had done twice before during the long drawn-out conflict. Those same forces which had been bent on destroying the union during the strike now singled out Lane as a primary target, and concentrated their attack on a school they considered to be a union stronghold. By December, 1968, the school was in the throes of its worst disruption as conditions paralyzed the educational bureaucrats. The union fully expected this type of guerrilla warfare by local vigilantes and Shanker had encouraged chapter militancy as a means of countering such groups.

At a citywide meeting of chapter chairmen immediately after the strike he announced, "Every employee in America has the right to expect that his employer will provide for his physical safety on the job." He went on to advocate the use of job actions (as an alternative to the citywide strike) as a weapon to be utilized by school chapters when the board refused to provide for their safety and security.

The conflagration that surfaced at Lane and at several other high schools during the winter of 1969 tore at the very fabric of society. But it was a battle to which the union leadership would not address itself, preferring to leave each school to its own devices in facing the revolutionary fervor of the Black Panthers, SDS Weathermen, and ASA militants. The union had emerged from the Great School Strike badly battered and scarred. Divided internally, with more than 5,000 of its members having crossed picket lines and breaking into schools, stripped of its liberal image in a liberal town, blamed by many, including the much respected Civil Liberties Union, for the racial polarization, Shanker made the healing process the very first organizational priority. It was a time to lick wounds, to analyze what had gone wrong, to reflect upon the future, to patch up the black-white rift, to restore the union's progressive image, and to rebuild a splintered organization that still faced a major battle over a permanent school decentralization bill. Once again, through organizational priority, the needs of Lane and the high schools in general were deferred in favor of more pressing demands. It was clear from the beginning that there would be no union show of strength in dealing with the racial flare-ups and the assaults against Lane's teachers and students, which were occuring, by January, 1969, on an almost daily basis.

While the disruption was not confined to Lane alone, only the Lane chapter had decided to reveal to the public all that had been covered up by the school administration. It was not a move that the UFT leadership uptown especially welcomed, for it was looking for peace and tranquility. Except for coverage of the Lane crises in the winter of 1968–69 and the fall of 1969 the union's own newspaper, the *United Teacher*, carried no stories about the chaotic mess prevalent at many city high schools. For the organization anything that touched upon racial conflict was a taboo subject. It was not until May 12, 1969, after six months of turmoil in the high schools, that Shanker so much as mentioned the problem. At a closed meeting of high school chapter chairmen he blasted the board for inaction and the mayor for helping to create a tone conducive to violence in the schools. But his remarks were not for public consumption, and there was no change in the union's hands-off policy regarding high school disruption.

Union politics and other UFT concerns left the high schools without an effective spokesman during their time of greatest need. Not even a unanimous vote by the High School Committee demanding that the full-time high school vice presidency be reestablished could induce Altomare to force the issue in the administrative committee on which he sat. It was an election year for divisional vice presidents, and fearful that Shanker might support an insurgency against him in the Unity caucus, Altomare avoided the whole issue of Lane and of lawlessness in many of the city's sixty academic high schools. The divisional vice president wasn't about to risk a bloody primary fight (and possible defeat) by standing up in defense of the legitimate concerns of the 12,000 high school teachers. Later, charges in the High School Committee accusing the Shanker leadership of being party to a conspiracy of silence drew vehement denials from the UFT officers. But the union leaders continued to turn a deaf ear to the daily reports of arson, of militants and adult agitators intimidating teachers, of teachers conducting classes in rooms with shades drawn and doors locked, and of bands of youths running wild through the halls, smashing windows and bowling over anyone who dared stand in their path.

By the spring of 1969 Shanker had consolidated his absolute control over the organization. Internally, dissent was equated with disloyalty, independence with insurrection. George Altomare was helpless. Even had he the inclination to represent his constituents he would have been alone, for most of the other independent-minded executive board members had spent their energies fighting Shanker on Vietnam. The other two-thirds of the body could always be expected to side with the president on any vote of substance, especially one which pitted Shanker against Altomare, As the high school crisis deepened, the further the leadership removed itself from the rank and file.

Strangely, the efforts to focus public attention on the strife-torn high schools came not from the teachers union but from the city's High School Principals Association (HSPA), an organization which only once before in its history (during the 1968 school strike) had dared publicly to condemn the school board. But on January 23, 1969, just three days after the Siracusa burning, the principals' group made public a detailed and analytical report of the high school situation, damning the school board for abdicating to extremists. In the strongest language, the usually reserved association blamed the board for failing to stand up to extremists and for refusing to support the efforts of school-based administrators to take firm and appropriate action against agitators and self-styled revolutionaries. The high school principals had elected to wage the battle the UFT saw fit not to make.

In its opening paragraph the principals' report called attention to "deliberate, planned, 'confrontations' designed to provoke the school authorities into actions that will win adherents and sympathizers for the dissidents," and, "Disorders and fears of new frightening dimensions stalk the corridors of many of our schools. Yet in the face of these obviously clear and present dangers, our Board of Education has virtually abdicated its responsibilities for the safe and orderly conduct of our schools. Preoccupied with the dismantling of a school system it does not understand or care about, our Board of Education seems unable or unwilling to come to the defense of our beleaguered schools. No one appears to be in charge. No one appears to be listening."

The body of the report provided an eloquent response to the demands of the militants that would have transferred all the decision-making powers to them, but the most decisive part of the document was its focus on student violence and an appeal to the school board. It concluded:

Meanwhile, as we continue to heighten and sharpen our awareness of and responsiveness to the pressing and unmet needs of our students and parents, we are united in our determination to make and keep our schools places where teachers can teach without fear and harassment, and students learn without distraction and disruption.

There are limits to the right to dissent—as there are limits to every other right. The right to dissent does not confer on students the right to disrupt the normal school processes. The right to dissent does not entitle any students to deprive their fellow-students of their education if they do not share or wish to join in their dissent. Nor does the right to dissent by its mere utterance, give instant sanction to student demands that cannot legally be granted or that students are demonstrably incapable of performing. The right to dissent carries with it the obligation to respect the rights and opinions of those who do not dissent. This, we take it, is the essence of democracy. This is what we propose to safeguard in our schools and in our society. And in this we know we can count on the overwhelming support of our parents and students. They see clearly that the disorders planned and executed by small, destructive groups are a menace to their education and security.

The hour is late. Our schools are in peril. It is the ineluctable duty of our Mayor, our Board of Education, our Superintendent of Schools to do what they have sworn to do: protect our schools, our teachers, and our students against the disturbers, the violents, and the enemies of public education within and outside the school system. We call on them to act firmly, quickly, and courageously against the divisive, disruptive forces and individuals loose in our schools working to radicalize, subvert, and poison the minds of our students.

We call on our Mayor, our Board of Education, our Superintendent of Schools to stop surrendering our schools piecemeal to the foundations, the opportunists, the extremists, the unrealists.

We ask the Mayor, the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools to stand up and talk up, loudly and unequivocally, for our schools. The people of this city, the teachers who man our schools, have a right to know whose side our public officials are on; the side of the parents who want their schools to be places where they can safely send their children to learn, or on the side of those who, by design, capitulation, indifference, or their naivete, are leading our schools down the road to anarchy.

We call on the Mayor, the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools to meet, at long last, their sworn commitments to provide a full, meaningful, secure education for "all the children of all the people" all the time—in all of our schools.[1]

There was no comment or acknowledgement from the UFT of the High School Principal's Association report—a report that the *New York Times* gave front-page coverage on January 24, 1969. The high school principals had enunciated the feelings of the overwhelming majority of teachers, but still the teachers union remained silent. Never once during that entire 1968–69 school year did its executive board address itself to the burning controversy raging at Lane and at several other disrupted schools.

By the fall of 1969, Altomare, reelected to a new two-year term and beginning to feel the pressure from those troubled schools, began moving toward the problem of high school disruption. Feeling somewhat more secure with a full term of office before him, and with high school teachers growing impatient with the union's refusal to oppose the board's new suspense procedure—a procedure which aided the disrupters—Altomare finally made the issue of student violence his prime concern.

As the 1969–70 school year opened, renewed violence at Lane prompted the vice president to use the High School Committee as a vehicle to bring the problems directly to the executive board. On November 20 a high school resolution stated: "That the executive board assume the leadership and responsibility of demanding an immediate investigation into the current disruption in the high schools."[2]

A month later the committee had as its guest speaker Richard Streiter, a mayoral aide on the School Task Force, who announced: "The disruption and disaffection plaguing the high schools is sounding the death knell for integrated education."[3]

Streiter emphasized the need for increased school security and voiced his concern about the polarization brought on by student militants. He went on to warn of a flight from the public schools and the city in general unless the trend toward violence was curbed. Streiter had been an asset in helping to cool things at Lane after the October riot and he sincerely believed that the full resources of the city had to be committed to solve the high school crisis.

As part of my own efforts to concentrate attention on the disruption I set forth my views in an open letter to high school chapter chairmen:

> That learning conditions in the high schools continue to deteriorate is a conclusion readily conceded by everybody involved with secondary education in the city. . . . How to stem the tide of violence, disruption, and lawlessness, is however, a question that still goes begging for answers which educational and public officials have been unable or unwilling to provide.
>
> Perhaps there are no easy answers for the problems which are deeply rooted in the urban crisis and which are probably more sociological and political than educational.
>
> But one thing is clear to those of us who have now, over a period of time, grappled with it in our own chapters, in the high school committee, and in the executive board of the UFT; namely, that there will be no educational reform, and no peace in the high schools, unless this very matter becomes a number one priority of the organization . . .[4]

And to my colleagues on the executive board:

> I am sure that we all understand that the Lane problem is in many ways an outgrowth of last fall's strife, in that those same forces which were committed to our destruction in Ocean Hill are now operating, some quite openly, in fomenting racial turmoil and polarization of the student body at Franklin K. Lane.
>
> It is, I know, apparent to all of us that what happens at Lane has immense significance not only to the high schools, but for the entire school system, the city, and our own organization. While there are no easy answers to the complex problem before us I know that we will want to stand firmly behind the Lane UFT chapter and give all due deliberation to find possible avenues of resolution.[5]

As calendar year 1970 opened there was nothing on the horizon to indicate that there would be any alleviation of the high school crisis in general or of the problems peculiar to Franklin K. Lane.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. Report of High School Principals Association of the City of New York, "The Nature and Limits of Student Dissent and Participation," Jan. 23, 1969.
2. Minutes, UFT High School Committee, Nov. 20, 1969.
3. *United Teacher*, Dec. 19, 1969.
4. Letter to UFT High School chapter chairmen from Harold Saltzman, Jan. 2, 1969.
5. Statement to UFT Executive Board by Harold Saltzman, Dec. 9, 1969.

Chapter 7

The Last Days

Just as the flag incident provided the backdrop for the riot of October 31, the riot itself was a signal for another month of seemingly endless turmoil. If outside adult groups had played a minor role prior to the riot they assumed major status after it. On November 2, a number of federally funded antipoverty agencies, including the East New York Alliance, The Brownsville Community Council, and the East New York Community Corporation, coalesced to come to the aid of the militants. Holding a press conference, they charged that the violence of October 31 was a police riot and demanded the removal of law enforcement authorities from the school. Several of the militant student leaders were on hand and presented a new version of what had touched off the riot. A spokesman for the militants said that the trouble started in the cafeteria when a black girl refused to produce an identification card requested by a teacher on duty. The student claimed that the four policemen who were on patrol in the cafeteria were called to the scene, and according to the youth: "Then the cops came and started beating on this girl. We could all see it. Pretty soon everybody started throwing milk and stuff . . . The teachers start something and then they call in the cops to do their dirtywork."[1]

Emerging as a key figure immediately following the riot was Mrs. Olivia Taylor, head of the East New York Alliance and a member of the District 19 rump school board. Fiercely nationalistic about the black movement, and with a long history of anti-teacher and anti-UFT activism, Mrs. Taylor headed up an ad hoc committee calling itself the Black Parents Emergency Committee. Assisting Taylor was Lloyd Mapp, recipient of a $10,000 per year salary in federal monies as the education director of the East New York antipoverty agency, and Thelma Hamilton, head of the Brownsville unit. Together they came to fan the flames of discontent and pour more fuel on the brightly burning fires. After the riot, on the afternoon of October 31, local whites had marched in front of the building as a protest against the violence. Now, Monday, it was to be the blacks' turn.

The Afro-American Students Association was busy over the weekend, too. Militant leaders greeted the black students on Monday morning with flyers stating, "THIS HAS GOT TO STOP!"

> . . . a beautiful black sister and a member of A.S.A., who has a rheumatic heart condition, was brutally beaten by a slimy white pig, badge #29336. . . a boss brother and A.S.A. member who had polio as a boy and his left leg is injured as a result of this illness, who was beaten and thrown through a plate glass window of the Finast Supermarket by two pigs, badge #470 and #476. Nine other brothers and sisters arrested by rampaging pigs! Students at F. K. Lane have been vamped on by principal Selub, Teachers (UFT) and the pig because they tried to raise the red, black, and green flag of the BLACK NATION. We believe that the brutal racist attacks on our black brothers and sisters have got to stop! The pig school system has never educated black people and now they are trying to beat and brutalize our young brothers and sisters. LET'S PUT AN END TO THIS WHOLE MESS!! NO MORE PIG SCHOOL SYSTEM!! REMEMBER, FROM NOW ON, DON'T PARTICIPATE:
>
> NO PLEDGE TO FLAGS!
> NO SINGING OF SONGS!
> NO ASSEMBLIES!
> NO LUNCHROOMS!
> NO ATHLETIC TEAMS![2]

There would be no peace at Lane for some time!

The school was an armed camp on the morning of November 3, the first school day after the riot. Only a few hundred students were in actual attendance and classes were dismissed at 11:00 A.M. to allow for school conferences. The dim view teachers took of the credibility of school officials was reflected in the statements to the press of chapter chairmen Baumann and Johnson: "Corrections have to be made here. . . . We're a little skeptical about the proposals made because of what has happened in the past five years."[3]

In accordance with the Gracie Mansion agreement, High School Superintendent Jacob Zack came to Lane early Monday morning to meet with the chapter representatives. Suspicious of the board's willingness to come up with any plan that would effectuate immediate and meaningful relief, Baumann and Johnson drafted their own proposals based on their own understanding of the school's problems and needs. At the appropriate time their nine-point program was unveiled to the participants of the morning conference. They recommended:

1. Security: Permanent complement of 12–15 security guards.
   Restoration of cuts in aide hour allotments.
2. Immediate freeze on all new admissions from November 4 through June 30, 1970, which shall be applicable to transfers and new admits.
3. A team of attendance experts will be assigned to Lane to determine the extent of truancy, out-of-zone students, etc.
4. All efforts consonant with Board of Education by-laws and state education law shall be made between November 1969 and February 1970 to schedule the school for a single session for the spring term.
5. In September 1970 the incoming 9th and 10th grade classes shall not exceed the maximum number of students necessary to maintain the school on a single session for the 1970–71 school year.
6. Central zoning will conduct a thorough re-examination of Lane's zone, its feeder pattern, et al. with a view toward making revisions to assure the sustenance of an integrated student body and to reverse the trend toward segregation at Lane.
7. The Assistant Superintendent in charge of the High School Division should clarify for the benefit of the faculty the Board of Education policy on 5 day suspenses and delineate at which point a student may be referred to his office for administrative suspense.

This request results from contradictory statements made by Mr. Selub at Lane H.S. and Mr. Zack at the October 31 Gracie Mansion conference.

8. The deans should furnish the Superintendent of Schools with a list of names of students who incited or participated in acts of disruption since October 23, 1969, and whose continued presence in school is, in their (the deans') view a clear and present danger to the student body.
9. It is understood that as part of Mr. Monserrat's commitment, made at the Gracie Mansion meeting, the Board and the Union will confer centrally on the matter of revising the educational curriculum to provide specialized job orientation and training for those youngsters who are not college bound.[4]

Jacob Zack was new on the job. He had been appointed assistant superintendent in charge of the city's ninety-one high schools as a result of the new decentralization legislation which removed the high schools from the jurisdiction of the local school boards and recentralized them under the direction of the central board. The meeting was convened in Selub's office early Monday morning. With Zack was one of his chief assistants, former high school principal Walter Wolfe. Joining Selub were his assistants, Peter Todaro and Mary Cohen. Altomare and I sat with Baumann and Johnson comprising the UFT team. Also participating in the discussions was Richard Streiter, the mayor's representative from the School Task Force. With only twenty-four hours left before the opening of the polls, Lindsay had a vital stake in seeing to it that the talks didn't break down.

Zack quickly took command of the meeting. He started by advising that the commitments he was about to make came directly from the superintendent himself, and that Brown was intent on following through on every pledge about to be made. The UFT chairmen held their own proposals in abeyance while Zack promised them a team of attendance experts (the daily attendance had dropped to 51 percent) and the immediate rescheduling of the school for a single session. All the school's programming and reorganization personnel would be brought in on Election Day (Tuesday) and on the following weekend to reprogram the school; they would be paid at the hourly rate of

$10.25. The high school superintendent honestly believed he had brought glad tidings that would more than satisfy the UFT chapter, and he was anxious to go before the faculty with his "wonderful" news. Zack had tried to speak at the faculty meeting following Selub's seizure on the afternoon of the riot. Never before in his professional life had he met with as much hostility from subordinates. But to the staff Zack was the enemy, representing as he did the bureaucracy that had doomed their school to this sufferance.

"What are you going to do to get us out of this mess?" one teacher had challenged. On Friday Zack didn't have an answer. Now he had something concrete to tell them, or so he thought.

When Zack finished making his report, a report that included few of the essential commitments demanded by the chapter leaders, Baumann presented the chapter proposals. Zack and the others were taken by surprise. They didn't expect a set of demands, and the high school chief retracted, becoming defensive. Mechanically, he began his response to the nine-point program: No, there couldn't be security guards at Lane because the budget didn't provide for it, but if the mayor supplied the money . . . (Gracie Mansion all over again) . . . No, there would be no freeze on admissions because other high schools were even more overcrowded than Lane and it wasn't fair to relieve one school while others were bulging even more . . . No, there would be no guarantee of a single session for September, 1970, nor could there be any commitment for a rezoning to relieve racial imbalance . . . And no, he would not crack down on the militants because a "buck-shot" approach would bring Kenneth Clark down on them again and put the board in trouble with the civil liberties people who had left last term's court case hanging (He reminded the UFT delegation that Clark, a member of the state Board of Regents, was still breathing heavily down the board's neck concerning the implementation of last May's court ruling) . . . Finally, no, there could be no assurances for a comprehensive restructuring of the school's academic program to provide specialized job and career orientation for those students who are not college bound.

Zack had nothing in his pocket except a guarantee to go on to a single session right away. It was the old public relations game, and it was intended to take the board off the hook. Now if something happened during the reorganization period, which was expected to last several weeks, they could always point to the rescheduling to show that something *was* being done. If there was a blow-up afterwards, no one could say the board had been nonresponsive. It was a clever hedge for Nathan Brown and Zack played it to the hilt. Anyway, they could reason, wasn't the single session a key union demand?

If Selub had been the maverick at Gracie Mansion, he had by Monday reversed his field, and he took his signals directly from Jacob Zack. There was no question about where he stood on this day. Zack's word was gospel, and every UFT doubt, fear, and counterproposal was subject to the principal's piercing attack. He had made his peace. Instead of standing up to fight for his school against the bureaucrats who had led it down the path of ruination, and who were ready to throw him on the scrap heap along with it, he was now quite willing to play their game. There was no relief, no real change, nothing except a shallow promise to condense the school day. Zack was a tough negotiator, and in spite of a full day of discussion he conceded to no more than he originally presented from Nathan Brown. Grudgingly, the chapter leaders agreed to go before the faculty, with Zack and Selub, in support of a package they knew didn't fill the bill. It was a major error for which the entire UFT delegation was responsible . . . including Altomare and myself. Zack had been so convincing in his promise that Lane would be given the very closest attention and most preferential treatment in the future. With the chapter's acceptance of the Zack proposals that afternoon went the last hope of bringing a sound and innovative educational program to Lane. We all knew that we had failed in our mission, that we had been bought off cheaply, that we had forgotten the painful lessons taught by years of broken promises. Zack was a school politico, and like the rest of the breed, would quickly forget about Lane . . . once it was out of the public eye.

November 4 was election day and the people of the City of New York gave John Lindsay another four-year lease on Gracie

Mansion. When Lane reopened the next day, Sonny Carson, the militant former head of Brooklyn CORE, was waiting at the school telling newsmen he was there "to confront school officials and to cash in on our first payment from Mayor Lindsay for the black votes he received in the election."[5]

Olivia Taylor and Lloyd Mapp arrived with a delegation of about forty concerned parents from the black community. Demanding to meet with Selub regarding the suspension of militant student leaders, their presence in the building sparked a new wave of violence. A newspaper reporter who had made his way into the school gave this eyewitness account:

> Throughout the morning bands of white and black students swarmed through the hallways, which were heavily patrolled by police and teachers. The rampaging students were sent back to their classrooms, but other groups replaced them in the hallways . . .
>
> At 11:30 A.M. . . . kerosene was tossed into the crowd of more than 1,000 students in the cafeteria. It smacked into the walls and students were hit by flying glass. However, the kerosene did not ignite. Chaos followed with groups of up to 30 students thronging into the cafeteria. Fist fights broke out and tables and chairs were thrown. After 30 minutes police broke up the melee.[6]

On November 5 school officials were unable to guarantee the safety of students and teachers at Lane. It appeared that they had chosen to close their eyes to the open warfare. People in responsible governmental and educational positions were paralyzed with fear. No one was in control of the school, except, perhaps, the militants. They directed their cadres with precision timing. They had planned their morning's activities well and when they went into action it was like a well-oiled drill team. Baumann and Johnson were outraged at Selub's failure to act. The anger they had suppressed all week over the Gracie Mansion sell-out by the UFT heads, and their own self-blame for having let Zack off so easily, now surfaced. Selub had been wandering about all morning trying in futile desperation to pull things together. But no one was listening. Realizing the dimensions of the breakdown he returned to his office to put through an emergency phone call.

Several of the deans and coordinators and the chapter chairmen had already congregated in Selub's office simultaneously to demand the closing of the school. But the principal had already reached that decision and dialed the superintendent of schools. The situation here is out of control, he told Brown. The principal wanted permission to shut down the building.

From 110 Livingston Street came the official reply . . . the school must stay open, no matter what. Selub was reminded of Monserrat's edict about school closings under fire. The principal's face reddened. No one at Lane had ever before seen him lose his composure. But the order to keep the school open was insanity, and more than he could bear.

"OK," he shouted back at the superintendent, "I'll do whatever you want, but if anything happens to any of these kids I'm not going to be responsible."

Selub slammed the receiver down on the hook and repeated to the gathering the choice words he had for the superintendent.

Baumann took it from there, calling Shanker's office to tell Sandra Feldman about the Brown-Selub tiff. At that very moment Shanker was on the phone with Brown. Minutes later the union president was talking to Selub. Had the principal actually requested Brown to give him the go-ahead to close the school? Shanker wanted to know. Selub, realizing that an affirmative answer would place Brown in a box, evaded the question. He began retracting, modifying what he had said. Evasively, he parried Shanker's questions. By the time he was finished he was categorically denying any difference with the superintendent. Of course he could keep the school open! And he did!

But Morton Selub's problems were just beginning. The Woodhaven–Cypress Hills Community Association had initiated a boycott, keeping most of the neighborhood youngsters out of school. On this day they carried their fight directly to the principal. Selub had made the mistake of letting Carson and followers enter the building earlier in the day. Now the association leaders demanded equal time. Selub refused. Putting on his overcoat to shield himself from the light snow that had begun to fall, he went out into the street to face the angry mob of local whites. Insulted and berated, abused and humiliated, he stood there, a mere shadow of a man, while the demonstrators charged him with cowardice and malfeasance. While a hundred mothers marched around a police barricade shouting, "Selub Must Go," Long and Galliani charged that: "Selub and his two deputies [Todaro and Cohen] proved themselves incapable of handling discipline at the school, and must be replaced."[7]

Selub's weak and vacillating approach to the crisis had left him alone, without allies, with no base of support. Even teachers, who had a natural sympathy for him, could not stand by the principal on this day. And on this first day after the election, from City Hall came the terse statement that "the mayor was watching the Lane situation closely and that members of his staff were working with school officials, faculty members, and the police to make sure 'all necessary steps are taken to maintain the orderly educational process.' "[8]

Not all the faculty members at Lane agreed on the causes of the breakdown. Maurice Gumbs, an anti-UFT teacher, gave an interpretation of the situation as seen through the eyes of the blacks. In a blistering attack against the staff, he posted an open letter on the faculty bulletin board entitled, "WHY IS THERE TROUBLE IN FRANKLIN K. LANE?"

> It requires no brilliant sociological analysis to determine that when a predominantly white staff, middle-class and conservative, drives in from the suburbs to meet a group of black ghetto children there is bound to be unrest. Delete *black* and *white* if you will—the statement remains equally true.
>
> If there was any doubt about the nature of the problem, it was quickly dispelled at Friday's [October 31] Faculty Conference.
>
> The smell of Fear, Reaction, and Hysteria was very strong at that meeting. There was Miss R. sobbing about students being scalped and burned. There was the elderly man with the Procaccino button and rabbinical training, shrieking about "Fifth Avenue shysters" who were trying to run the school. There was the tall Physical Education teacher warning solemnly that the school should be closed. Then there was the kindly-looking deputy superintendent [Zack] whispering about muggings in his buildings, of international intrigue, and a plot to take over the school. . . . And brisk Mr. S. pleading, "What is going to happen on Monday?" Yes, and a hysterical voice screaming, "Remember Siracusa."

> Finally, the big moment when Mr. J let it all hang out shamelessly and received the loudest applause of the day. Images of black buck savages raping the helpless white women; "I wouldn't want my mother or sister down there with them." . . . Black animals running wild . . . "It's a zoo down there [student cafeteria]. Five hundred of them backing me against the wall." . . . Black burr-heads being bloodied . . . Put them in the streets so the police can take care of them like they should. Even the black bodies lying in the cafeteria as an example . . . "I don't understand why the police did not draw their weapons."
>
> Only applause for Mr. J . . . no protest against his criminal remarks . . . suppression of the symptoms with no desire to touch the real problems . . . no introspection.
>
> For the future—angry black boys and girls will keep coming to Lane from rat-infested homes in the ghetto. They will not be gentle and submissive to start with. Very quickly they will meet and recognize the contempt and fear expressed on Friday. They will react. They will close ranks, becoming brothers and sisters in the face of the enemy. If there is anything definite it is that there will be increasing unrest and violence at Franklin K. Lane . . .[9]

About the continued unrest and violence, there was no question.

The student militants were not wanting for support in the black community. Solidly behind them were the Carsons, Mapps, Taylors, Campbells, and black teachers like Gumbs who all chose to excuse the violence by philosophizing about the root causes steeped in the pathology of ghetto existence. The time was ripe for Kenneth Clark to step back in, and he did. The noted educator, regent, social scientist, and author called a press conference to charge "systematic harassment" of minority group youngsters at Lane. Pointing especially to the UFT and the white community he alleged discrimination against black students by special interest groups which were "systematically excluding minority group children from their right to an education."[10]

A shudder went through Nathan Brown!

Kenneth Clark had become a sacred cow in educational circles. Wielding vast power, he was hailed by many as the outstanding national authority on the subject of educating ghetto children and in New York City he was above criticism. No one saw fit to question Clark's motives. No one asked why Clark hadn't spoken out against the inhuman atrocities that were being perpetrated on whites by black youths. The witch-hunt he called for, would be conducted by his own Ford Foundation-funded Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC), which would demand a purge of white racist teachers, sadistic club-swinging police, and the bigoted local community. Such was the frame of reference the noted educator brought to the already troubled scene.

The crisis in the city's high schools began getting more local as well as national attention. In February, 1970, the *New York Times* ran a series of articles about the troubled high schools. One report focused on the environmental conditions in the ghetto which made educational achievement almost impossible for large numbers of black youths. In explaining the high rate of truancy, for instance, the study noted:

> Some are so poor they have no time for anything but the struggle to stay alive; some are frustrated by their inability to do high school work; some are rebelling against parental and teacher authority; some are sapped of energy by asthma and other chronic ailments; some are living the half lives of drug addicts; some are turned off by studies in which they see no sense.[11]

The article went on to talk about the free hot lunches in school which for many of the youngsters is the only decent meal they get. And it talked about the broken, chaotic, and unstable homes, and of "muggers lurking in hallways," and of the prevalent diseases which make education seem unimportant compared to the everyday struggle to stay alive. A guidance counselor in a troubled school summed it up best when he said: "No real change is going to take place in the schools until there are fundamental changes in the society outside the schools."[12]

Earlier, I had written to New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller and to legislative leaders, urging action on some of the educational reforms needed in the high schools. The letter was in response to press reports that Lane students had helped turn the State Legislature into a shambles on January 12, 1970, during a lobbying campaign organized, in part, by Leslie

Campbell and the Afro-American Students Association of which he had become chief adult adviser. I wrote:

> I was alarmed, but not surprised, to learn of the abuse heaped on the legislature yesterday by a group which included a sizeable delegation of students from Franklin K. Lane High School. The teachers who watched the buses depart from the school had little doubt that the legislature was to be subjected to a small taste of the violence and terror that has become something of a routinized way of life at our school.
>
> You were exposed yesterday to just a minuscule sampling of what has been the general order of things at Lane High School for fourteen months: 1% of a 5,000 student body being permitted to turn the school into a battleground and create the ugliest kind of racial polarization.

In addition to legislation to revise pupil suspense procedures and to bring schools like Lane into the realm of manageability, the message also concentrated on the need for educational reform in the high schools:

> Funds must be appropriated for a rather comprehensive and realistic program focused on job orientation and career training which will truly meet the needs of those non-college bound youngsters who are most alienated by the current general course of study, and for whom the high school experience is irrelevant. . . . If our high schools are to survive, if the dream we share for an integrated society is to be realized, if educational reform is to be an answer to bring the alienated into the mainstream, then it would appear that this problem must be a priority for this legislative session.[13]

Lane High School had become more than just a microcosm of society. The groups and the individuals who were continually inciting the disturbances were well known to the Brooklyn district attorney's office. At the time of the October 31 riot, Lindsay announced that he had asked Brooklyn District Attorney Eugene Gold to conduct a special investigation to determine if there had been any criminal activity connected with the disruption. If the investigation was ever conducted nobody associated with the teacher leadership of the school was aware of it, nor were any findings revealed. The militants continued to force their will on the school.

There was little hope left as November drew to a close. Lane High School was, in every sense, a freak institution, an orphan of the educational system. What hope could there be for a school that was considered too hot to handle even by the local politicians? It was a school to which neighborhood residents refused to send their children, a school from which teachers sought to transfer, and into which others refused to accept assignment. The future couldn't have been darker.

It didn't take long for the faculty to realize that the mayor and the school board had again begged off the Lane controversy. Neither Seymour Lachman, the Brooklyn school board member, nor Murray Bergtraum, the Queens member, was going to inject himself into the problem of a school that sat squarely on the boundary line dividing their respective boroughs. And even Jacob Zack was growing wary because of all the time and attention this one school was requiring from his staff and from him personally. The promise of immediate conversion to a single session was a neat ruse perpetrated by the school board to cover itself in the event there was another explosion that semester. But there was a direct correlation between the incidence of disruption and the administration's movement toward actually implementing it. On Election Day, November 4, and on the following weekend, more than fifty teachers were employed for nearly 900 man hours to reprogram the school for a single session. The cost of the job, more than $9,000—money squandered since the single session was not put into effect that semester.

On Friday, November 7, after another week of turmoil, Baumann and Selub jointly announced that they had reached agreement on implementing the single session. The pressure was still on. The union chapter had even gone as far as to allow a variance in its contractual limitation on class size:

"Under our contract with the Board of Education," Baumann said, "we can have no more than 34 students on register in any class. We have agreed, reluctantly, to allow larger numbers here at Lane so that we can get a single session as quickly as possible." He was sure to add, "However, it must be made quite clear that this is an emergency situation. And what we are doing is the only available solution."[14]

Meanwhile, the reorganization toward a single session proceeded. But it was soon obvious that the administration was stalling as long as possible, hoping to limp through to the end of the semester without a mid-term shift. Several department chairmen had objected to the consolidation of classes in mid-semester and had persuaded Selub to hold off. The union chapter, aware of the game Zack and Selub were playing, didn't push the issue since it was the February semester they were primarily concerned with. But there was no end to the chain of deterioration. On November 7 Schools Superintendent Brown visited the school and after implying his criticism of Selub for having allowed Sonny Carson to enter the building, he emphasized to waiting reporters that there would be no discharges, transfers, or suspensions to achieve the single session.

"Under no circumstances will we remove any students in order to reduce the number of those on the school register," he said.[15]

By mid-November there was still no single session in spite of the $9,000 expenditure for reprogramming. At the same time new students were still being admitted into the already overcrowded school, and on November 14 I wrote to Zack reminding him of the discussions of November 3.

"While the teachers have consented to temporarily suspend several of their contractual working conditions no comparable accommodations have come from your office," I said. "Single session does not relieve overcrowding, and it is wrong for the public to be given the impression, as it had come through the news media, that the problem is being solved by the new schedule."

The letter concluded with an appeal to the high school superintendent to make good his pledge to keep the enrollment to an absolute minimum by placing a freeze on new admissions until the size of the student body was reduced through normal attrition. "The admission of 40 to 50 additional students each month will most assuredly prevent the school from getting back on its feet and carrying on a normal educational program."[16]

Zack responded with: "I must say I am deeply disturbed about what you propose (the freeze on new admissions) and the manner in which you state it."[17] He insisted that any such relief for Lane would impose impossible burdens on other schools and he proceeded to give statistics showing that many other high schools were operating at even higher rates of overutilization. It was the same approach of playing the needs of one school off against others, and in the end doing nothing for any.

Still another week passed in November, and no change of sessions. Things were cooling it seemed and there was less pressure to make the session shift. But on November 25 the school erupted again: fights broke out, and a firebomb was thrown from an upper-floor window into the courtyard below. There were several confrontations between police and black youths. Several of the students were arrested on charges of disorderly conduct. To the militants the flag issue was still very much alive. They had declared a section of the cafeteria to be their "turf," and there, each day, a delegation was entrusted with the duty of keeping the black liberation flag displayed atop the table. There was a stand-off, with the administration electing to take no further action on the flag question. On November 25, however, the militants decided to step up their campaign and tried to hoist their flag high over the cafeteria. Several teachers intervened, touching off another spree. Black students charged out of the cafeteria and up to the fourth floor where one ended up wrestling with a policeman. In front of the auditorium a patrolman was surrounded by an angry mob of blacks. The school was on the verge of another full-scale riot.

For Baumann and Johnson it was the last straw. They had consulted and compromised, they felt, and had been deceived by Zack and Selub, and sold out by their own union leadership. The militants who had initiated the disruption had been suspended earlier for five days and were returned to school. For the first time in all the six weeks of conflict the UFT chairmen publicly threatened a strong direct action by the chapter.

"We were promised a single session," they said, "but nothing has been done to relieve the serious overcrowding which makes the single session technically impossible. . . . We're not quite sure what kind of job action would take place, but something could be done very soon."[18]

Selub had flip-flopped once too often, and when he began advocating the end-to-end idea as a substitute for the single session which had been promised, his fundamental integrity was subject to question by the union chapter. The word had come down through UFT channels that Brown had reneged and was now in favor of the end-to-end plan which provided for two totally separate school sessions each day. Under that kind of setup, which was already being utilized in a few high schools, the younger students would arrive at noon and depart about 6:00 P.M. The upper grades, juniors and seniors, would begin their school day at about 7:00 A.M. and be finished by noon. Under this system only half the student body would ever be in the building at any given time, theoretically, and there would be no need to maintain the student cafeteria which was a perennial trouble spot. It was a plan that was totally unacceptable to the UFT chapter.

While the session feud simmered, the school board continued its charade of giving lip service to efforts to combat high school disruption. On November 9, Board President Monserrat announced that student dissent would be tolerated in the schools only if it was nonviolent and did not interfere with normal educational processes. But Monserrat failed to make the distinction between student dissent, which was essentially an educational matter, and the kind of lawlessness which in the society at large came under the purview of the Police Department. His comments reflected a clear unwillingness to admit that the disruptions went well beyond the scope of student dissent.

In an effort to appease the Student Union, SDS, ASA, and Panther-connected radicals which were operating quite openly in the public high schools, Seymour Lachman, Brooklyn's board member, sponsored a resolution calling for increased students rights. Included in the board proposal were provisions giving students exclusive control over student newspapers free of administrative censorship, the right to wear political armbands and other badges of symbolic expression (Black Panther buttons were especially popular at Lane), and the right to prepare and distribute political literature on school premises. The proposal elicited a wave of criticism from parents, teachers, and administrators. In his carefully prepared statement Monserrat tried to pacify the critics by announcing:

> Teachers have a right to teach in a climate free from harassment and other disruptions. Parents have a right to expect that their children are safe in school and can pursue a meaningful education. Among the several rights of pupils themselves is the right to learn without interference from their schoolmates and the right to be free from illegal assault at the hands of any persons.[19]

These were familiar words. They had been uttered by his predecessor, John Doar, by Nathan Brown, and by Donovan before him. And even by the mayor himself. It was old hat to students who had been victimized by student dissent and to parents who had already lost faith in the ability and the will of the public school authorities to protect their children. The militants had been enormously successful in polarizing the student body at Lane, of generating unrest, and of igniting the fires of racial turmoil in schools throughout the city. Few who had lived through the nightmare took Monserrat's words seriously, even when the board president stated:

> Assaults on fellow students and others, and demonstrations that interfere with normal instruction will not be tolerated. At the same time that we ask principals and teachers to promote a truly democratic atmosphere in the schools, we promise them also our full support of any actions to insure proper order and effective learning, including the arrest and exclusion from school of students who inflict injury on others or damage property.[20]

But the Lachman proposals on student rights weren't winning many friends. Most educators recognized the document as a farce because the plan was impossible to administer. Lachman's plan removed areas of responsibility from principals which state law mandated they exercise. Louis Schuker, the veteran principal of Jamaica High School in Queens, exposed the proposal in a critical letter to the board sponsor, telling Lachman:

> I find that the vast majority of parents are less concerned with students rights at the present moment than they are with the increasingly disruptive and menacing atmosphere of the schools to which they must send their children. During the past several days we have learned of the latest disturbances at Adams, Forest Hills, and Franklin K. Lane. . . . In my experience it is not the vast majority of youngsters, modest about their attainments and certitudes, who need a bill of rights for their defense in a city which has been child-centered for a generation. The majority of high school students today need psychological and sometimes even physical protection against the small minority of aggressive, dogmatic, negative, and loudly assertive adolescents who dominate the scene.

After a lengthy ridicule of the Lachman plan, charging the board member with abdication to the most violent elements of the student community, Schuker concluded:

> The omitted preamble to the Board resolution justly decries the dehumanization of our schools noting they have become too large and impersonal. Here is where the Board of Education could make a real contribution to the improvement of the high schools. For 40 years, to my knowledge, the high schools have been overcrowded and on multiple sessions. What we don't need is more rhetoric encouraging greater permissiveness. What we don't need at this point is the weakening and undermining of the authority of the school administration which has through every form of legerdemain kept these large monsters operating with amazing efficiency and even educational success.
>
> What we do need desperately is 20 buildings within the next two years to end the unconscionable overcrowding which has afflicted the high schools. It is the overcrowding which sends pupils to school at dawn and has other pupils travelling home after dark. It is overcrowding that deprives teachers of a room of their own and hampers development of warm, inter-personal relationships with pupils and produces dangerous anonymity. Unfortunately, without strictly enforced regulations, 5,000 pupils could never be safely scheduled into a school built for 3,000. It is the overcrowding that has necessitated many of the rigidities, restrictions, and regulations that have offended, and many of the grievances would be dissipated as the overcrowding diminished.[21]

It wasn't politic to oppose the Lachman plan, and, as it had done with the board's earlier student suspense decree, the union was quiet on the issue of student rights. The board was doing the expedient thing, and the union, ever so fearful of impeding its own image-restoring program, did not object. But the school board received its own first personal glimpse of student anarchy at its November 12 public meeting at the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan. The meeting, which attracted about 700 persons from all over the city, was for the purpose of holding an open forum on Lachman's document, which he called "The Rights and Responsibilities of High School Students." Only a few days earlier the Afro-American Students Association had held a general meeting at JHS 271 in Ocean Hill and had decided to attend the board's public session to protest the resolution (which they felt didn't go far enough) and counter it with a list of black students' demands.

Lane's militants were well represented in the forty-member ASA delegation that forced the school board vice president, Murray Bergtraum, to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 P.M. before the controversial item could be debated by the speakers who had come for the specific purpose of stating the views of various public and private organizations. The ASA militants took control of the floor microphones and began reading a list of fifteen demands to the board. Responding with vulgarities whenever a board member tried to remind them of proper protocol and decorum, the students intensified their barrage. People who had attended public meetings for years claimed they had never seen anything resembling the fascistic tactics of the black student militants. One observer, representing a coalitition of high school parents associations said: "The demonstration was not a spontaneous uprising. Black students had been going up and down the aisles seeking support. If there's any future for the New York City school system, somebody better step in and do something."[22]

For at least thirty minutes the well-trained students expertly carried through on their avowed aim of breaking up the school board's public meeting. One of Lane's most notorious militants (a girl) read the group's fifteen demands to the board:

> . . . An end to automatic suspension of students. . . .
> Ban police and police aides from schools. . . .
> Adhere to fire regulations by keeping open all school doors. . . .
> Open schools to daily parental observation. . . .

> Eliminate the general course of study. . . .
> Suspend regents examinations [statewide end of term tests] because they are 'racist.' . . .
> Alter teacher qualifying examinations to make black educators proportional to the student population. . . .
> Check books and educational materials to determine their adequacy. . . .
> Create school clubs along ethnic lines, such as all-black organizations to be supported by the school's General Organization fund. . . .
> Provide music in lunch rooms and more dances, and athletic programs with rifle clubs and self-defense classes instead of games. . . .
> Ensure that teachers have the background to teach courses such as black studies. . . .
> Create student-faculty councils with equal representation to make decisions on curriculum, staffing, discipline, and school regulations. . . .
> Reorganize high schools along community lines so black students will not have to attend schools in hostile communities.[23]

November 12 came and passed, and the board had witnessed the reckless abandon of those they were seeking to appease with their program of student rights. To every sincere observer it was perfectly clear that the militants weren't the least bit interested in defining and protecting student rights, but rather with the exploitation of avenues of controversy to bring forth more violence, more disruption, more polarization. Three months later the school board tried again, holding another public meeting on the Lachman proposals. But once again the meeting was disrupted by student militants, and again Bergtraum ordered an early adjournment that denied private citizens and groups the right to present their views to the school board.

All through the month of November Franklin K. Lane functioned haphazardly, a powder keg that could explode at any time. Racial tensions and violence intensified throughout the month. It was common knowledge that most of the very same militant leaders who had provoked the October 31 riot and subsequent disruptions were back in school doing their thing. By this time many had undergone even more indoctrination as evidenced by their brash statements to school authorities. One assistant dean noted that a key leader of the militants had told him: "I am committed to continued violence at Lane," and added, "If anybody tries to take down our flag there will be a bloodbath and the white kids will get it."

These remarks were recorded on the student's disciplinary record and the deans insisted that the information be brought directly to the principal's attention. But Selub flatly denied knowledge of any such statements and later chastised the assistant dean for having brought the threats to the attention of the union. Meanwhile, Zack had promised that student disrupters would not be permitted to return to Lane, and yet no less than eight such youngsters who had been given the maximum five-day principal's suspension were all returned to the school when the High School Office and/or Selub decided to drop the cases. Even when one of the militants told a dean, "You better start thinking about your wife and kids," there was no sense of urgency on the part of the bureaucrats to invoke the measures available to them to remove the school delinquents.

Attacks by black students against whites continued. Whites stayed out of lavatories, the auditorium, and the student cafeteria. The auditorium, especially, had become a den. It was there that a white girl had been attacked by a group of five black girls, stripped of all her clothing from the waist up, beaten and kicked. It was also the place where a white boy had his hair set afire by a group of blacks. Soon, even the deans were challenging the principal for his inaction. Their job was to maintain safety, but they found their efforts to remove the violents stymied by the principal. Selub, in turn, pointed to the new suspense law which, he claimed, prevented him from moving against the provocateurs. By the end of November the staff was totally demoralized with many teachers refusing to make even the slightest attempt to enforce school discipline. For many it was a question of their own survival. The mere request for a student's identification card had come to be considered an act of provocation. Teachers stopped asking. In those grim November days a fatality would have come as no surprise to anyone who spent any amount of time in the school that month. It seemed as if the cheapest commodity was the very life of a child!

As conditions worsened, all signs pointed to the prospect of Selub being removed as principal. The school's UFT chapter, however, had never been among the groups—parent and student—who were demanding his dismissal. It was a faculty-splitting issue, and one which the UFT chairmen chose to avoid. Neither had any great love for Selub, but they realized that as a probationer since his arrival at Lane in 1967, he had no tenure in his rank and could not be expected to assert any authority if it went contrary to the wishes of the higher-ups. For Selub, they believed, tenure was the name of the game and he would do nothing to jeopardize that $26,000 salary ($7,000 over his previous pay as department chairman), which would increase automatically in the next three years to a top of $32,000. Most teachers felt that Selub would be replaced, transferred, or kicked upstairs to a post at board headquarters after June, 1970, and that his only real concern was getting tenure and the $32,000 guaranteed income that came with it. The suspicion that Selub was on his way out was given even greater credence when the board sent a principal-in-training, Sol Levine, to sharpen his spurs in Lane's wars. Levine, thirty-seven years young, arrived on the scene with a reputation as an outstanding administrator—the man who had put out the racial fires in another Brooklyn high school (Canarsie) the year before. As the rumor of a Selub for Levine swap grew louder the chapter leaders made their own personal position clear. They were unalterably opposed to making Selub the scapegoat. They, who had been among his severest critics, knew that a switch would mean another three years with a probationary principal. How different things might have been had there been a strong, experienced, and tenured man at the helm during those tumultuous years. Would a secure and knowledgeable principal have permitted the board bureaucrats to bury the school, and would he have allowed it to sink to these depths? Selub had certainly contributed to the downfall, they felt, but he was better than the alternative proposition of going through another three-year probationary period with a brand-new man and the "don't rock the boat, boys" attitude that went along with it. As bad as Selub had been, they were willing to gamble with him, hoping that he would be a different administrator once granted his tenure. Lane had been leaderless for so long that another probationer was exactly what the school did not need. (The speculation about Sol Levine's future ended on March 16, 1970, when he was permanently assigned as the principal of George Washington High School in Upper Manhattan; a school that had been wracked with violence and shut down early on thirteen consecutive days over the demand by a group of adult agitators to operate a grievance table for students in the school's lobby.)

As the final days of the fall semester approached, a question arose as to the type of physical organization the school would have for the new term beginning in February. Zack had promised an immediate conversion to a single session in November, but later backed off, leaving the decision to implement it in Selub's hands. Albert Shanker and Nathan Brown had conferred often on the Lane question, and in spite of the November pledge Brown now told the union leaders that he would order the end-to-end session for February. On December 9 Zack came to a meeting of the Lane Parents Association and announced that the superintendent was still undecided about the sessions for February. In reality Brown didn't want to make the decision, not wanting to be held accountable if the school blew under the end-to-end plan. Brown passed the buck to Zack, hoping the high school chief would give the order, but Zack had made the single session promise before a full faculty meeting at Lane and wasn't about to be called a liar by 300 teachers. He, in turn, left the decision to Selub, who announced his preference for the end-to-end arrangement over the single session. Choosing to subvert the pledges made on November 3, the principal called a full faculty conference on December 15 to try to sway the staff to his way of thinking on the end-to-end idea.

But Selub made a poor case and was no match for Baumann and Johnson who had done their homework. On the day of the meeting they distributed to the faculty copies of a four-page study entitled "An Analysis of End to End Organization." After setting forth the advantages and disadvantages of both end-to-end and single session, the chairmen concluded with their own views and preferences, as follows:

> The Chapter Council is unanimous in its opposition to an end to end session at Lane as a solution to our problems. We might add that the Parents Association expressed their opposition to such a plan at the November 26 meeting of the Principal's Consultative Council.
>
> We feel that an end to end session is a drastic measure that may ease the problem of the cafeteria but does not address itself to the disorders and disruptions related to outside agitation, cutting, truancy, classroom behavior, narcotics, conditions in the halls, and school tone in general.
>
> We believe the administration must implement existing rules with determination and develop new rules to re-establish discipline and create and maintain a safe atmosphere for students and teachers alike ... A mere substitution of new rules and new schedules without provision for their enforcement isn't the answer. Existing machinery can deal with the present problem if the responsibility of power is utilized.
>
> In our opinion it is a comparatively small minority of the student body who are refusing to conform or cooperate with the rules of the school community. To permit the disruption of the education of approximately 4,800 students and impose hardships on the entire professional staff because of their actions is to submit to the "tyranny of the minority" to the detriment of all.
>
> We must not allow any individual group or organization to sell out education to achieve "peace at any price."
>
> The future may well be that of continued and additional pressures and the watering down of the quality of education in the public schools by methods like the end to end session to restore "peace and quiet." But this will most assuredly continue the trend away from the public schools by those who want real education for their children. Those who cannot run will remain in a city school system whose greatest asset will be the ability to respond to the politically expedient rather than the educational need.
>
> Not even hope will remain.[24]

The entire faculty, almost to the man, voted to sustain the union recommendation.

Lane opened with a single session in February, 1970, a session which at least offered hope that an educational program could be conducted, and that the school would be returned to the mainstream of the academic community.

Students, parents, and teachers held their breath, and waited.

Notes to Chapter 7

1. *New York Times*, Nov. 4, 1969.
2. Circular, Afro-American Students Association, Oct. 31, 1969.
3. *Long Island Press*, Nov. 4, 1969.
4. Lane UFT chapter proposals, Nov. 3, 1969.
5. *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1969.
6. *New York Daily News*, Nov. 6, 1969.
7. *Long Island Press*, Nov. 6, 1969.
8. *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1969.
9. Open letter to the Lane faculty from Maurice Gumbs, "Why Is There Trouble at Franklin K. Lane?", Nov. 5, 1969.
10. *New York Daily News*, Nov. 8, 1969.
11. *Ibid.*, "Truancy Overwhelms Truant Officers Here" by Michael Stern, Feb. 2, 1970.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Letter to New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller from Harold Saltzman, Jan. 13, 1970.
14. *Long Island Press*, Nov. 8, 1969.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Letter to High School Superintendent Jacob Zack from Harold Saltzman, Nov. 14, 1969.
17. Letter to Harold Saltzman from High School Superintendent Zack, Nov. 26, 1969.
18. *Long Island Press*, Nov. 26, 1969.
19. *United Teacher*, Nov. 16, 1969.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Letter to Brooklyn board member Seymour Lachman from Jamaica High School Principal Louis Schuker, Nov. 3, 1969.
22. *Long Island Press*, Nov. 13, 1969.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Report of Lane UFT Chapter, "An Analysis of End to End Organization," Dec. 15, 1969.

Epilogue

The Spring, 1970, semester was the most productive and peaceful term Franklin K. Lane High School had enjoyed in four years. In May there was a faculty-student picnic at Long Island's Hecksher State Park, and in spite of an all-day drizzle some 350 students and teachers participated in the outing. Bert Jeffrey, a black industrial arts teacher who was well liked and respected by most of the staff (even though he had crossed union picket lines in the 1968 strike), assumed the new position of coordinator of student affairs. Working closely with the militants as a confidant of sorts and as their link with the administration, Jeffrey was a key factor in keeping things cool all during that spring term.

By April the register was down to 4,274 students, a number that was realistic for the single session. Accordingly, there were far fewer "drop-ins" and it even became possible to resume assembly programs. Even the tone of the school cafeteria, the most reliable barometer in the building, was almost bearable—a far cry from the anarchy of previous semesters. Much of the credit for the prevailing peace was directly attributable to the presence of twelve black and Puerto Rican security guards employed by the school board to patrol the halls and regulate entrance to and egress from the building. While the guards had the power to arrest they carried no weapons and wore street clothes, often emulating the mod styles worn by the students themselves. Friendly, personable, most in their early and mid-twenties, they quickly established a rapport with the black youngsters. The guards came to recognize and know by name the students who cut class and who wandered the halls or loitered in the lavatories, stairwells, or cafeteria. They won the respect of the student body and were able to get some of the most troublesome students back into class or at least removed from those areas where they most frequently caused disturbances. The same black student who reacted with hostility to the politest request by a teacher on hall patrol usually acquiesced to the same request when made by a security guard.

During that spring semester Lane was actually a place of teaching and learning. At any given time of the day one could stand at the far end of the main first-floor corridor—the hallway which was usually the most densely congested with aimlessly wandering students—and for minutes not see a soul there during a subject class period. The quiet halls were conducive to a healthy educational atmosphere and inside the classrooms the learning process was taking root. And there seemed to be hope for the future, too. The Lane UFT chapter had gone on record the previous October (see page 130) as favoring the introduction of a special job- and career-oriented program for the school. A faculty committee headed by Seymour Cohen and the chairman of the grade-advisers, Seymour Harr (both UFT chapter activists), met with numerous industrial and business leaders for five months to secure career-oriented jobs for students which would lend themselves to meaningful curriculum revision. If school could somehow be made more "relevant," they thought, by having a direct correlation to the jobs students held after school hours or in alternate weeks—and if more than just a handful of Lane students could participate in such a pilot project—then maybe, just maybe, the school could be saved. Cohen and Harr, with the help of Mary Cohen (no relation), drew up the blueprint for the program in the hope that it could go into operation for the fall semester. Oscar Dombrow, formerly principal of James Monroe High School in the Bronx, had been tapped by Jacob Zack to fill one of the new positions as acting assistant superintendent in charge of Brooklyn high schools. The two Lane teachers, with the support of the school administration, Baumann and the UFT chapter, and the central UFT office, sold Dombrow on the idea. The new assistant superintendent even tacitly agreed to their top-priority recommendation that the new incoming class be kept down to about 800 students, as opposed to the 1,300 that were usually admitted from the feeder junior high schools. Confident that they were on the verge of winning a new life for their school, Cohen and Harr made great strides in interesting private enterprise in the prospect of a partnership with a school that had become the orphan of the academic community in New York.

But it didn't take long for the bubble to burst, as soon as it became apparent that this was another in the long line of public relations gimmicks used by the school board to deceive parents, teachers, and whole communities. It started when the Lane chapter learned that local pressures from Ridgewood, Queens—home of Assemblywoman Rosemary Gunning of antibusing fame—had resulted in a secretive and unannounced zoning change for Ridgewood's Grover Cleveland High School. Cleveland, like Lane, had drawn its students from a contiguous zone which included both Brooklyn and Queens. But unlike Lane, the Ridgewood school took only about 30 percent of its student body from the predominantly black Bushwick section of Brooklyn. In the spring of 1970 a core of black militant students engaged in a campaign of violence creating unprecedented turmoil at Grover Cleveland. The civic and political forces of western Queens reacted strongly and with dispatch. The result: no more Bushwick (black) students would be sent across the Brooklyn-Queens border into Cleveland. The school would soon return to its former lily-white status and Ridgewood was to be spared the fate that had befallen Woodhaven and Cypress Hills. But that zoning shift had far-reaching implications for Lane High School. To accommodate the change, Brooklyn students who had been in the Cleveland zone were redistricted into the already overcrowded Bushwick High School. The overutilization rate for Bushwick would rise to 212 percent. Put in other terms, for every seat in Bushwick High School there would now be two students. Instead of opposing this cynical coup, UFT Vice President George Altomare registered no protest and directed his energies to seeking out an annex building to house Bushwick's overflow. Unfortunately, the Bushwick UFT chapter was not moved to action, allowing Altomare instead to lull them into acceptance of the rezoning with promises of speedy relief and special programs.

For Lane the Cleveland shift meant an adjustment in Brooklyn zoning. Since Bushwick High School was picking up a large area that formerly went to Cleveland, Lane was saddled with a part of what had been Bushwick's zone, killing off any chance to keep the incoming class down to the 800 figure.

"But what am I going to do with 500 kids?" Oscar Dombrow pleaded when the chapter leaders pressed him on his pledge to give Lane a reduced incoming class. Not only did the High School Office back away from its promise to give Lane this numerical relief, but its bureaucrats went a step further, twisting the knife to doom Lane to yet another year of turmoil, violence, and racial polarization. In 1969 the graduating class of JHS's 271 and 55 of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district had been spread out among many different Brooklyn high schools. These were the students who had received special ideological training by the militant blacks in that experimental district and who, consequently, harbored the most antagonistic feelings against "whitey," the "system," and those UFT teachers who were "purposely destroying the minds of black students." Bowing to pressures from the other end of the borough, the High School Office now moved to zone the great majority of Ocean Hill students back into Lane. They proceeded to remove the skip zones that could have given Lane the breathing spell it needed for the 1970–71 school year. Where Lane had received only 128 students from that controversial district in 1969, the number jumped to 450 in 1970. And with that increase came the decline of incoming whites to 19.5 percent. It was the final blow. The patient that seemed on its way to recovery in the spring of 1970 heard the death knell sound as school reopened in September. And with the influx of such large numbers of politicized and academically retarded youngsters went what was probably the last hope of saving Lane High School.

The scene in the fall of 1970 was almost an exact repetition of 1968 and 1969. Disruption, crime, and other acts of violence were rampant. The program for job and career training got buried in the bureaucratic maze of funding and there was a plan afoot to dilute it (by the mayor's Urban Action Task Force) by spreading the pilot project out among several high schools. Instead of saturation for Lane they now began talking about giving the school only a piece of the pie—a piece too small to make any difference if the project ever got off the ground. By January, 1971, there were still no signs that the program would ever be implemented.*

Meanwhile, Lane again became a battleground. Added to the 1,374 incoming ninth and tenth grade class were 691 transfers from other schools—mainly vocational schools—pushing the total number of new students to 2,000. With that swelling enrollment and renewed violence came the untimely 50 percent reduction in the corps of security guards. Instead of the twelve guards who had played such a vital role in holding the school together the previous term, Lane was cut back to six in September, 1970. Of that six only three remained from the original group that had distinguished itself in the spring term. Part of the problem was that the school board had refused to permit a collective bargaining election that would have given the guards union representation, a contract, security, fringe benefits, and a living wage. Instead, the school board had chosen to keep their wages at the near poverty level of $2.87 per hour —under $100 per week—with no job security and without pay during the extended holiday recesses such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring vacation, as well as legal holidays. And come the summer months, they joined the ranks of the unemployed. Small wonder that most of them refused to return to

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*The pilot project is scheduled to begin in September, 1972, for 200 ninth and tenth graders and for 400 junior and senior class students.

Lane. It was a severe loss to the school, leaving a gaping hole in its security as the new term began.

But as trouble flared at Lane the chapter strategy changed. Where publicity had been used to great advantage in the past, Jim Baumann had concluded, heeding Altomare's counsel, that exposing the violence to the public would be counterproductive. Consequently, there were no news releases from the Lane chapter and the new wave of terror went almost unnoticed by the school board and general public. In contrast, at the other end of the city, at George Washington High School in Upper Manhattan, there was a steady stream of publicity about the organized violence that was gripping the school. The activist posture taken by the school's union chapter even convinced the staunchly "liberal" *New York Times*, which editorialized on the subject of high school violence on October 24, 1970:

> The city's high schools are badly in need of reform. Educational concepts and personal attitudes cry out for change. Physically, the schools are dehumanized by intolerable overcrowding that aggravates the disadvantages inherent in their excessive size.
>
> But none of these deficiences can excuse the plain hoodlumism that has terrorized George Washington High School into shutdown and that in only slightly less virulent form, is turning some other schools into hazard zones for law-abiding students, teachers, and ordinary citizens on the route to and from school.
>
> Part of the problem is that revolutionaries among students and parents regard such turmoil as the ideal breeding ground for their radical designs. Unfortunately, others honestly bent on essential reforms let the radical rhetoric delude them into believing that the violent behavior of a few students is indeed the forward wave of social progress.
>
> It is nothing of the kind. Delinquent adolescents masquerading as Robin Hoods in order to escape punishment, are in reality engaged in the lowest form of intimidation, shakedowns, extortion and violent assault. They avoid being treated as youthful criminals by spreading rumors of racist persecution and by denouncing legitimate arrests as police brutality.
>
> The crisis at George Washington High must not obscure the need for pedagogical reform and better educational leadership. But the exploits of a small band of hoodlums should not be mistakenly tolerated as a form of routine youthful alienation. They are a matter for effective law-enforcement. The majority of students have the right to full assurance that they can attend school without fear of coercion and violence.

Lane High School was certainly more than a mere "hazard zone" in a *Times* editorial. In spite of the renewed warfare, a decree from Police Inspector Edward Joyce of the 12th Division, Brooklyn, removed four of the seven policemen assigned to the troubled school as of November 20. Joyce had met with Selub the week before with the idea of removing all seven policemen. The principal had told the inspector of the mounting tensions in the building but Joyce was under pressure to get more of the 2,000 cops in his command out on the street. The seven patrolmen at Lane, he thought, could easily be redeployed to meet the demands from City Hall.

But the inspector was soon to get his first taste of student violence—as only Lane's cadres knew how to supply it. At Baumann's insistence Selub arranged a special meeting in his office, bringing together the school administration, himself, Todaro, and Mary Cohen; Joyce, Captain Cerrone of the 75th precinct, and several lower-ranking officers; Baumann and his UFT chapter committee, Ed Johnson, Ed Grice, John Sowa, and Betty Ann McDonough; Vice President Altomare, UFT District 19 Representative Richard Procida, UFT Brooklyn Borough Representative Maurice Sussman; and representing the school board, Assistant Superintendent Oscar Dombrow. At issue were two points. First, there was the matter of the breach of the January 10, 1969, agreement signed by Altomare, myself, and District Superintendent Elizabeth O'Daly calling for the assignment of the seven policemen inside the building until such time as the principal and chapter chairman agreed on a timetable for phasing them out. While both Selub and Baumann agreed on the necessity of maintaining the police, the principal had violated the 1969 accord when he failed to bring the UFT chairman in on his discussions with the inspector. In all fairness to Joyce, he had no knowledge of the written agreement when he issued his order, and was surprised to learn of its existence when copies were distributed to the parties by Baumann as the meeting convened on November 20. Nor was Joyce aware that the agreement was the result of the behind the scenes play between Nathan Brown and the mayor's own School Task Force.

The second issue concerned the soundness of removing the police at this particular juncture. Even if Joyce had the authority to arbitrarily terminate that 1969 agreement by removing the police detail—which we all granted he *did* have—there remained the question of the Police Department's responsibility to protect students from criminal activity on school premises. Selub, Dombrow, and the UFT spokesmen (primarily Baumann and Altomare) appealed to the inspector, but he was steadfast. Then, as the discussion proceeded, that all too familiar rumbling came from the student cafeteria in the basement below the principal's first-floor office. There was the smell of burning paper, the chanting of "Power to the People," and the crash of tables and benches being overturned. For what seemed an eternity, but was probably not more than twenty minutes, the meeting continued even while all the signs of an emerging riot stared the participants in the face. Ben Rosenwald, an acting assistant principal, had made several incursions into the meeting, first brandishing a three-foot-long iron bar that had been hurled through a window, shattering a large pane of glass in the student cafeteria and sending hundred of students scurrying for cover; and again, minutes later, bearing news of a white boy having been beaten into unconsciousness by a band of blacks; and finally, a third interruption to whisper to Selub what everyone in the room had known for twenty minutes—that a riot was breaking out in the cafeteria! Only when John Sowa commented, "Gentlemen, I think we're fiddling while Rome is burning," did the meeting adjourn. The riot had been brewing all week and it was about to spread from the cafeteria to other parts of the building. Now the police inspector would see for himself. And how he saw!

The genesis of the November 20 disruption was easily traced to the emergence of a new school club, the Third World Student Union, composed mainly of younger black youths who were bent on continuing in the footsteps of the original militants—most of whom were no longer in the school. The Third World group became an immediate source of friction. Selub had given them special permission—which he later withdrew—to meet in the school cafeteria during the home room period. All the evidence seemed to point to the fact that the Third World was behind the mounting tension. On November 23, three days after the big outburst, a teacher aide wrote Baumann a letter describing what she had witnessed during the course of performing her duties in the cafeteria:

> I am a school aide here at Lane. I assist in the distribution of free lunch tokens in the student cafeteria during the official period. During that time I have observed the meetings of the 60 (estimated) youngsters who participate in the Third World Students Club. When the official period ends the faculty advisor leaves, but about half the club members remain in the cafeteria for the 4th period.
>
> When trouble has erupted in the cafeteria, such as the rampage of last Friday, it usually begins at the tables occupied by the students who remained from the Third World Club meetings.

Although Selub had specifically ordered the faculty adviser not to meet with the club during the home room period, its members defied the principal and continued to gather in the cafeteria. Now it was November 20 and what a day they had picked to do their thing! Unaware that some of the highest-ranking police officers in Brooklyn were at that very moment conferring in the principal's office, the Third World group swung into action. Marching their cadres up to the first floor they picked up supporters with each pass. Behind the red, green, and black liberation flag the procession advanced, chanting in unison the now familiar "Power to the People" ditty, shouting obscenities at teachers who stood by dumbfounded, watching in shocked disbelief.

Joyce, realizing that the small contingent of men left in the school was inadequate to curb the rapidly developing riot, sent out an SOS for reinforcements. Within fifteen minutes a squad of thirty riot police was in the building. Cerrone took charge, deploying the men at key points to prevent the mob's free access to all parts of the building and to force them to leave by the single exit adjacent to the principal's office. Without physically interfering with the demonstrators the police formed a human barricade that channeled the students out of the building and into the street where they soon dispersed. Sensing the disruption hundreds of other students seized upon the opportunity to get out of school early, and left. By 12:30 P.M. the building was 90 percent empty.

Edward Joyce, red-faced but smiling as the meeting reconvened in Selub's office, observed: "Well, when I pull a boner I sure pull a boner." The matter of the seven policemen at Lane was resolved—and would be for some time if Ed Joyce had anything to say about it. The Third World students had accomplished what the professional judgment of the entire high school division (administration and union) had been unable to do—convince the Police Department that seven cops was not an excessive number to protect almost 5,000 students from the everyday crime and frequent political disruption at Lane.

The November 20 explosion did not go unnoticed in the local community. On November 28 the *Long Island Press* carried a news story headlined "PRINCIPAL BLAMED FOR OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE AT LANE."

"After nearly a year of quiet and educational progress in which our association [Cypress Hills-Woodhaven Community Association] was a major contributing factor Lane is again a troubled school," declared Michael R. Long, cochairman of the association, following an in-depth study of the situation. "Our executive board found that Selub permitted hate to be preached within his school despite repeated warnings of his staff that a dangerous situation existed in the school and was bound to erupt at a given time, and displayed a complete lack of leadership in allowing 'The Third World Movement' to function with the resultant senseless attack upon students."

The Third World had set the tone for the remainder of the semester and as school recessed for the Christmas vacation on December 23, teachers and students looked back on yet another semester of chaos and terror at Lane High School. What new horrors 1971 would bring, nobody could safely predict.

On December 16 Harvey B. Scribner,* the new chancellor of the now decentralized city school system, addressed the UFT's Delegate Assembly. (The chancellor post replaced the superintendent of schools as the number-one administrative job.)

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*Dr. Scribner came to New York by way of rural Vermont and Teaneck, New Jersey, where as schools superintendent his educational policies came under heavy fire.

The next day I seized upon the occasion of his speech to advise Dr. Scribner of the breakdown at Lane. The letter follows in its entirety:

> Dear Dr. Scribner:
>
> Like the rest of the UFT delegates who came to hear you speak I listened with great interest, yesterday, hoping that you would address yourself to the critical problem facing high schools such as my own Franklin K. Lane. (Lane sits squarely on the Brooklyn-Queens borderline, between the communities of Cypress Hills and Woodhaven.)
>
> Since your speech did little more than mention the problem of high school violence I must assume that your subordinates in the Office of High Schools have not kept you apprised of the "guerrilla warfare" that is raging at Franklin K. Lane and certain other high schools. Or, perhaps, the High School Office is not getting the information from their administrators in the field.
>
> Whichever the case I must tell you in all frankness that the situation here at Lane High School is approaching anarchy. Consider, if you will, these facts:
>
> 1. In many sections of the building it has become almost impossible to conduct a lesson due to the constant disruption in the halls. Bands of students roam the halls banging on classroom doors and committing acts of vandalism.
> 2. Dice games and smoking cigarettes in the student cafeteria and hallways have become usual occurrences.
> 3. Fires are set in student lockers. Classroom and office windows are smashed.
> 4. Last week a total of 27 thick glass stairwell dividers were shattered.
> 5. Bulletin boards are doused with highly flammable fluid and set ablaze.
> 6. Trays of food and other refuse litter the hallways and stairwells.
> 7. Fire extinguishers are torn from the walls, released, flooding the halls with foam.
> 8. Many teachers conduct classes with doors locked and shades drawn.
> 9. Increasing numbers of students are attempting to draw teachers into physical confrontations. Teachers, fearful of their own safety, are rendered helpless to enforce disciplines of the most fundamental nature. Faculty demoralization is setting in rapidly.
> 10. Frightened students refuse to enter the cafeteria or a lavatory.
> 11. The deans can provide alarming statistics on the incidence of

> muggings, extortions, and brutal assaults against helpless and innocent youngsters.
>
> 12. There is strong evidence to indicate that much of the violence is organized from within the school by administratively sanctioned "clubs"—which are given direction by extremist elements in outlying areas from where Lane draws a large part of its student body.
>
> Yes, you are correct in stating to the UFT Delegates that student violence is only an emanation of deeper educational shortcomings which need reform. We heartily agree. But unless something is done at Lane, quickly, I fear that there will be nothing left to reform!
>
> I am reminded of a letter sent to Mayor Lindsay some time ago by a parent of a Lane student—pleading that steps be initiated to end the reign of terror. Her words echo a frightening reminder:
>
> "This letter may label me a frantic mother," she concluded, "but please don't let me become a bereaved one."
>
> Chancellor Scribner—we at Lane need help and we need leadership. Don't turn your back on us as the High School Office has done so many times in recent years. There isn't much time left.

There was no reply from the Chancellor's office, only a defensive response from Oscar Dombrow charging that Lane's problems could be solved if only the teachers would be more cooperative. Not that it really mattered! Bernard Donovan, Nathan Brown, Irving Anker, now Harvey Scribner! The names and the faces had changed, but one thing had remained constant during these years of strife at Franklin K. Lane High School—the crowd at 110 Livingston just didn't give a damn!

For Lane this really was the end.

Appendix A

LANE SCHOOL CENSUS
1958–1969

	Non-white				White		
	PUERTO RICAN		NEGRO		OTHERS		REGISTER
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
1958	94	2.6	783	21.5	2773	75.9	3650
1959	120	3.2	735	19.7	2867	77.1	3722
1960	134	3.6	792	21.0	2848	75.4	3774
1961	160	4.1	923	23.5	2852	72.4	3935
1962	179	4.2	1223	28.7	2860	67.1	4262
1963	207	5.1	1385	33.7	2509	61.2	4101
1964	260	6.3	1721	41.6	2159	52.1	4140
1965	319	7.2	1897	43.0	2197	49.8	4413
1966	466	9.8	2145	45.0	2152	45.2	4763
1967	640	12.5	2435	47.4	2061	40.1	5136

	NEGRO		AMERICAN INDIAN		ORIENTAL		PUERTO RICAN		OTHER SPANISH SURNAMED AMERICAN		OTHER WHITE		TOTAL
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1968	2691	50.	5	0.1	23	0.4	767	14.4	93	1.7	1795	33.4	5374
1969	2606	53.5	3	0.1	19	0.39	682	14.0	68	1.4	1497	30.7	4875*

*Projected total.

Appendix B

Integration of Brooklyn (K) and Queens (Q)
Academic High Schools

	Non-White Student Enrollments		
School	1968 %	1964 %	1960 %
(K) Boys	97.8	86.5	54.2
(K) Prospect Heights	88.7	68.8	36.8
(K) Eastern District	85.6	72.6	49.6
(K) Thomas Jefferson	76.5	44.1	21.0
(K) Bushwick	69.7	35.3	15.8
(K) Franklin K. Lane	66.6	47.9	24.6
(K) George Wingate	62.6	51.4	22.1
(Q) Andrew Jackson	52.2	43.0	27.5
(K) John Jay	47.6	27.0	16.3
(K) Bay Ridge	39.7	14.9	6.1
(Q) Springfield Gardens	36.0	*	*
(K) Erasmus Hall	34.9	18.6	8.1
(Q) Grover Cleveland	34.4	3.7	0.9
(Q) John Adams	29.4	21.8	15.2
(K) Franklin D. Roosevelt	28.2	*	*
(Q) Jamaica	27.3	19.8	9.7
(Q) Francis Lewis	27.1	2.6	0.0
(Q) Richmond Hill	25.5	18.9	2.6
(K) Samuel Tilden	25.0	4.1	1.7
(K) Canarsie	24.1	33.1	*
(Q) John Bowne	22.6	16.4	*
(Q) Long Island City	22.1	18.0	7.4
(K) James Madison	19.6	6.4	0.5
(Q) Benjamin Cardozo	19.0	*	*
(K) Fort Hamilton	17.3	9.6	1.0
(Q) Far Rockaway	15.2	9.5	5.4
(Q) William C. Bryant	14.8	9.8	1.7
(Q) Martin Van Buren	14.7	6.8	2.4
(Q) Newtown	13.9	9.9	7.2
(K) Midwood	13.9	8.9	0.5

(Q) Forest Hills	13.2	7.7	1.1
(K) Sheepshead Bay	11.8	1.8	0.9
(Q) Flushing	11.2	12.2	6.0
(K) Abraham Lincoln	10.0	3.5	2.4
(K) Lafayette	9.7	2.3	0.4
(Q) Bayside	9.5	3.1	0.2
(K) New Utrecht	6.7	2.5	0.2

*Denotes school not yet in operation.

Note: Only Brooklyn and Queens academic high schools are listed in view of the fact that Lane is located squarely on the border of the two boroughs and has a contiguous interborough zone.

Appendix C

FRANKLIN K. LANE HIGH SCHOOL AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
Based on the six highest monthly reports.

1960–61 – 86.5
1961–62 – 87.0
1962–63 – 85.0
1963–64 – 85.3
1964–65 – 80.0
1965–66 – 73.1
1966–67 – 74.3
* 1967–68 – 67.0
** 1968–69 – 55.0
*** 1969–70 – 55.2

* Does not include data recorded during strike of September, 1967.
** Does not include data recorded during strike of September to November 1968.
*** Includes all monthly reports up to March, 1970.

Appendix D

Who's Who of Race War in the School

Allen, James E: New York State Education Commissioner; United States Commissioner of Education (1969).

Alsop, Joseph: Syndicated columnist concerned with racial strife in public high schools; writer of article, "Police in the Schools."

Altomare, George: UFT Vice President for Academic High Schools; member of the Lane High School faculty.

Anker, Irving: Assistant Superintendent assigned to the office of the Executive Deputy Superintendent (promoted to Acting Superintendent of Schools in 1970).

Badillo, Herman: Bronx Borough President; 1969 candidate for the Democratic party nomination for mayor.

Battista, Vito: State Assemblyman (Republican-Conservative) from Cypress Hills; 38th A.D. Brooklyn.

Baumann, James: UFT Chapter Chairman of Lane, 1969–70.

Benisvy, Neil: Lane teacher; assault victim January 6, 1969.

Bergtraum, Murray: Board of Education member from Queens; Board Vice President.

Bettinger, Michael: Lane teacher; assault victim January 7, 1969.

Bonowit, Dorothy: Assistant Superintendent for Queens High Schools (1965).

Bowles, Sally: Mayor's Educational Liaison Director.

Brown, Nathan: Executive Deputy Superintendent; and (September, 1969) Acting Superintendent of Schools.

Bundy, McGeorge: President of the Ford Foundation and architect of the 1967 plan to decentralize the New York City school system.

Bursky, Hyman: UFT Chapter Chairman of Lane, 1967.

Campbell, Leslie: Teacher at JHS 271 in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville demonstration district; adviser to the Afro-American Students Association; Vice President of the Afro-American Teachers Association.

Carson, Robert (Sonny): Ocean Hill militant and 1968 Chairman of the Brooklyn chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE).

Cerrone, William: Captain of the 75th Police Precinct, Brooklyn.

Clark, Kenneth: Member of the New York State Board of Regents; Director of the Ford Foundation-funded Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC).

Cogen, Charles: President of the New York City Teachers Guild and United Federation of Teachers (1952–64); President of the American Federation of Teachers (1964–68).

Cohen, Mary: Assistant Principal of Lane High School.

Cohen, Seymour: Lane teacher; member of the UFT chapter Consultation Committee; coauthor of the Career Development Program.

Dannen, Edwin: Coordinator of the East New York Attendance Bureau.

Degnan, Walter: President of the New York City Council of Supervisory Associations (CSA).

DeLeonardis, Vito: UFT Director of Staff.

DiLorenzo, Jeannette: UFT district representative; chairman of the UFT Unity Caucus.

Doar, John: President of the Board of Education (1968–69).

Dombrow, Oscar: Assistant Superintendent in charge of Brooklyn high schools.

Donovan, Bernard: Superintendent of Schools.

Donovan, Walter: Member of the executive committee of the Woodhaven–Cypress Hills Community Association; 1968 Republican candidate for the State Assembly from the 29th A.D., Queens.

Douglas, Margaret: District 19 Superintendent, and (1967) Deputy Superintendent of Schools.

Eisner, Harry: Principal of Lane High School, 1948–62.

Feldman, Sandra: Special Assistant to the UFT President.

Feldstein, Louis: Director of the mayor's School Task Force.

Flack, John: State Assemblyman (Republican-Conservative) from Glendale, 30th A.D., Queens.

Friedman, Rose: Parent of a Lane High School student.

Galamison, Milton: Pastor of the Silom Baptist Church in Brooklyn; Vice President of the Board of Education (1968–69).

Galliani, Joseph: Member of the executive committee of the Woodhaven–Cypress Hills Community Association; Chairman of the 38th A.D. Independent Club; founder of the "Dump Lindsay" movement.

GELERNTER, SANFORD: Member of the UFT Executive Board.

GIARDINO, ALFRED: President of the Board of Education, 1967–68.

GOLD, EUGENE: District Attorney, Kings County (Brooklyn).

GOLDEN, CARL: UFT chapter chairman of Lane, 1964–65.

GOODMAN, HERMAN: Lane High School security "aide."

GOTTBAUM, VICTOR: Executive Director, District-Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

GRICE, EDWARD: Lane teacher; member of the UFT chapter Consultation Committee.

GUMBS, MAURICE: Lane teacher; author of open letter, "Why Is There Trouble at Franklin K. Lane?"

GUNNING, ROSEMARY: State Assemblywoman (Republican-Conservative) from Ridgewood, 34th A.D., Queens.

HAMILTON, THELMA: Chairman of the Brownsville (antipoverty) Community Council.

HARR, SEYMOUR: Lane teacher; coauthor of the Lane Career Development Program.

HIMONIDIS, GEORGE: UFT Chapter Chairman of Lane, 1966–67.

HOFFMAN, WILLIAM: Lane teacher; member of the executive committee of the Woodhaven–Cypress Hills Community Association.

HOPKINS, MAURICE: Assistant Superintendent in charge of High Schools (1965).

JEFFREY, BERT: Lane teacher; coordinator of Student Affairs.

JOHNSON, EDWARD: UFT Chapter Chairman of Lane, 1969–70.

JOYCE, EDWARD: Inspector, 12th Police Division, Brooklyn.

KAHANE, MEIR: Rabbi, National Chairman of the Jewish Defense League; author of "The Face of Fascism."

KAPLAN, BEN: Candidate for UFT Vice President of Academic High Schools, 1967.

KATZMAN, ARTHUR: New York City Councilman from Forest Hills, Queens.

KING, RONALD: Assistant to the Assistant Principal of Lane; adviser to Lane African Culture Association; instructor in black studies.

KINGSLEY, STANLEY: Director, Office of Central Placement (Board of Education).

KISSANE, EDWARD: District 19 Coordinator of Community Relations.

KOCHIAN, EDWARD: UFT field representative.

KOLODNY, JULES: UFT Secretary.

LACHMAN, SEYMOUR: Brooklyn member of the Board of Education;

sponsor of the Board's resolution on "The Rights and Responsibilities of High School Students."

LaMarca, Anthony: Lane teacher; Coordinator of Security in the Student Cafeteria.

Landers, Jack: Assistant Superintendent for Zoning (1965).

Leary, Howard: Commissioner of the New York City Police Department.

Lerner, Alfred: State Assemblyman (Republican-Conservative) from Richmond Hill, 28th A.D., Queens.

Levine, Abe: UFT Vice President for Elementary Schools.

Levine, Sol: Principal in Training assigned to Lane High School.

Levine, Sol: UFT Vice President for Junior High Schools.

Leviss, Sidney: Incumbent Queens Borough President; candidate for renomination in the Democratic party primary.

Lewis, Jim: UFT Chapter Chairman of Lane, 1967.

Lindsay, John V.: Mayor of the City of New York.

Lizza, Ray: UFT Welfare Fund Director.

Lobenthal, Martin: UFT executive board member; Academic High School Vice President (1964–67).

Loiacono, Charles: UFT field representative; President of the Teachers Representative Union; leader of the Teachers Reform Party.

Long, Michael: Member of the executive committee of the Woodhaven-Cypress Hills Community Association; Conservative party district leader, 38th A.D., Brooklyn.

Love, J. David: Coordinator for Neighborhood City Halls; special mayoral representative in the Lane crisis.

Lubetsky, Robert: Lane teacher; specialist in black studies.

Mailer, Norman: Author; candidate for mayor in the Democratic party primary.

Mapp, Lloyd: Education Director of the East New York (antipoverty) Community Corporation.

Marchi, John: State Senator (Republican-Conservative) from Staten Island (23d S.D.); Republican-Conservative candidate for mayor.

Margolis, Steve: Assistant Dean of Boys; assault victim (November, 1968).

Marshall, Calvin: Pastor, Varick Memorial A.M.E. Church of Brooklyn.

McCoy, Rhody: Unit Administrator of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration school district.

McDonough, Betty Anne: Lane teacher; member of the UFT chapter Consultation Committee.

McSloy, Paul: Acting Chairman, Lane Social Studies Department.

Meany, George: President of the AFL-CIO.

MEYERSON, A. FREDERICK: State Senator (Democratic-Liberal) from East New York (15th S.D., Brooklyn).

MITCHELL, REUBEN: UFT Associate Legislative Representative.

MONSERRAT, JOSEPH: Bronx member of the Board of Education; Board President.

NAUMAN, FRED: Candidate for UFT Junior High School Vice President; Director of the UFT College Scholarship Fund.

NOBLE, BRUCE: Lane teacher; Secretary of the Faculty Workshop on Racism.

O'CONNELL, JAMES J.: Principal of Lane High School, 1963–67.

O'CONNOR, FRANCES: Executive Assistant to the District 19 Superintendent.

O'DALY, ELIZABETH C.: District 19 Superintendent.

O'NEILL, JOHN: UFT Director of Staff (1964–67); Vice President for Junior High Schools (1967–69).

PACHECO, JOSEPH: UFT field representative; cofounder of the Teachers Reform Party.

PAPPAS, TOM: UFT Chapter Chairman of John Adams High School in Ozone Park, Queens.

PARKER, PAUL: News Reporter for WINS Radio, New York City.

PESHKIN, JACOB: Administrative Assistant; Acting Principal of Lane, 1962.

PROCACCINO, MARIO: Comptroller of the City of New York; 1969 Democratic party candidate for mayor.

PROCIDA, RICHARD: UFT District 19 representative.

QUILL, MICHAEL: President of the New York City Transit Workers Union.

REUTHER, WALTER: President of the International Brotherhood of Automobile Workers.

RICHARDS, EDNA: President of the Lane High School Parents Association.

ROBINSON, ISAIAH: Manhattan member of the Board of Education.

ROCHE, MARY ELLEN: Lane teacher.

ROCKEFELLER, NELSON: Governor of the State of New York.

ROSENWALD, BEN: Lane teacher; Acting Assistant Principal.

SADOWSKI, ANTHONY: Member of the executive committee of the Woodhaven-Cypress Hills Community Association; Democratic party district leader, 29th A.D., Queens.

SAGER, JEROME: Lane teacher.

SALTZMAN, HAROLD: UFT Chapter Chairman of Lane, 1968–69; District 19 UFT Representative; member of the executive board.

SANDERS, DAN: UFT Director of Public Relations and Coordinator of Negotiations.

SANTUCCI, JOHN: State Senator (Democrat) from Richmond Hill (11th S.D. Queens); candidate in the Democratic party primary for Queens borough president.

SCHEUER, JAMES: Bronx Congressman; candidate in the Democratic party primary for mayor.

SCHMIDT, FREDERICK: State Assemblyman (Democrat) from Woodhaven (29th A.D. Queens)

SCHUKER, LOUIS: Principal of Jamaica High School, Queens; critic of the Board of Education proposal on "The Rights and Responsibilities of High School Students."

SCRIBNER, HARVEY: Chancellor of the New York City Public School System.

SELDEN, DAVID: President of the American Federation of Teachers.

SELUB, MORTON: Principal of Lane High School.

SHANAS, BERT: Reporter for the *New York Daily News.*

SHANKER, ALBERT: President of the United Federation of Teachers, Local 2, American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO).

SHAPIRO, MORRIS: UFT Vice President for Vocational High Schools.

SIEGEL, HARRY: Secretary of the Board of Education.

SIRACUSA, FRANK: Lane teacher; assault victim, January, 1969.

SMITH, MARCUS: Lane teacher; member of the UFT chapter Consultation Committee.

SOWA, JOHN: Lane teacher; member of the UFT chapter Consultation Committee.

SPERANZA, VINCENT: UFT field representative.

STAVISKY, LEONARD: State Assemblyman (Democrat-Liberal) from Beechhurst (23d A.D., Queens); candidate in the Democratic party primary for Queens borough president.

STEINGUT, STANLEY: New York State Assembly minority leader (Democrat), 11th A.D., Brooklyn.

STENNIS, JOHN: United States Senator from Mississippi.

STEWART, WALDABA: State Senator (Democrat) from the 18th S.D., Brooklyn.

STREITER, RICHARD: Coordinator for the mayor's High School Task Force.

SUSSMAN, MAURICE: UFT Brooklyn borough representative.

SWANKER, ESTHER: Assistant to the New York State Deputy Commissioner of Education.

SWEET, ROBERT: Deputy Mayor of the City of New York.

TAYLOR, OLIVIA: Chairman of the East New York rump school board, East New York Educational Alliance; spokesman for the Black Parents Emergency Committee.

THORNE, HILLARY: Board of Education School Zoning Director.

Todaro, Peter: Assistant Principal of Lane High School.

Travia, Anthony: Speaker of the New York State Assembly, 1965–68.

Van Arsdale, Harry: President of the New York City Central Labor Council.

Wagner, Robert: Mayor of New York (1952–64); 1969 candidate in the Democratic party primary for mayor.

Ward, Walter: New York City Councilman from Howard Beach, Queens.

Weinstein, Jack B.: Judge of Federal District Court, Brooklyn.

Williams, Frederick: Assistant Superintendent at Board headquarters.

Wittes, David: UFT Treasurer.

Wolfe, Walter: Assistant to the High School Superintendent.

Wright, Samuel: State Assemblyman (Democrat-Liberal), 37th A.D., Brooklyn.

Zack, Jacob: Assistant Superintendent in charge of High Schools.

Appendix E

Black Panther Plans for Controlling Black High School Students*

Activists in Black Student Unions (BSU's), which are now proliferating across the country in high schools and in colleges, are coming more and more under Black Panther Party domination, the prime example of this being the San Francisco State College riots, in which George Murray (minister of education of the Black Panther Party) took a key role. Local disturbances and demands of black students can be directly attributed to the Black Panther Party mainly due to an organizational outline for Black Student Unions that was prepared and distributed by the Black Panther Party in December 1968.

There follows an outline of that on this and the succeeding pages.

EXHIBIT NO. 383

ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT—SOME BASIC GUIDELINES

The high school is one of the most important components in these early stages of the Black Liberation Struggle. It is one of the few places where you have a true cross-section of at least one segment of the Black community: the youth. The purposes of organizing the Black high school student is to: (1) Create an atmosphere at the school where students can learn to think, (2) Establish a base area from which to operate in other sections of the Black Community, and (3) Recruit cadres for other areas of activity in the Black Liberation Struggle. This paper is designed to give some basic guidelines for high school organi-

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*[Source: Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, Part 19, June 18, 1969, pp. 3826, 3849–3853.]

zation, and should be treated only as a guide and not a rule book. The most important factor is the initiative of those organizing to assess the situation of the particular high school he is organizing at and come up with particular methods in that situation.

I. HARD CORE STEERING COMMITTEE

This committee must be made up of trained, disciplined bloods who attend the high school. They should meet as many times a week as possible with a member of the B.P.P.N.C., who will provide the link between them and the party. Also, these hard-core bloods should attend party meetings and should be active members of the party, if possible. For security reasons the groups should be small, possibly five or six. They should be as uptight or more uptight than the average party member, because it will be their role to recruit the masses of students at the high school. This is the most important component of the high school organization, and several months of intensive study and training should be taken with them before they will be able to carry on the functions of the party at their school. Their first loyalty must be to the B.P.P.N.C., from which they will receive direct orders.

II. OFF-CAMPUS GROUP

These hard-core Brothers will comprise the Central Committee of a Black Nationalist organization (OCG) of members of the particular high school, who will hold their meeting off-campus initially, will be made up of those who will be doing the day-to-day work of the organization; passing out leaflets, selling newspapers, talking to fellow Black students, etc. Efforts should be made to put to use any skills which come out of the group, such as photography, artistic ability, writing ability, etc. The members of this group, of necessity, cannot be worked with as much as the hard-core group, but they must be given at least one session a week in lecture and discussion of such things as Black History, political Philosophy, Organizing Techniques, Karate, and any other subjects which the party leaders see as being necessary. The most important thing to realize is that this will be an organization chiefly of workers. The policy of the group will be set and determined by the B.P.P.N.C. through the hard-core steering committee, all the time inviting discussions, criticisms, and suggestions, from members of the OCG. The only way there will be any discipline in the organization is if the members realize that the steering committee is the leader but the only way the group will be of any success is if the steering committee realizes that it must listen to the demands of its group and of the masses of Black students on the campus. Only with this interaction can here [there?] be any progress made in organizing the Black students in the high school.

III. UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION

The first job of the OCG should be to create some sort of organization on campus and instantly make all Black students at the high school a part of this organization. This would be a meeting ground where all Black students could come, despite class or other differences, and talk out their problems without having to thump on them. It must be understood that this is a Black organization, no whites allowed, and that the reasons for this are not racist, but simply that Black People must learn to come together themselves to discuss their collective problems. . . . An interaction from all sides of the picture should be encouraged, and no Black student should be forced out as long as he is sincere in trying to get the problems solved. This is the place where the OCG would find out just what the interested Black students at the school are thinking about, and from these meetings plans of action can be drawn up. Also, this Umbrella Organization can be a powerful force during negotiations with the school, which will usually come at one point. The purpose of the Umbrella Organization will be to bring about a united front of the bourgeois and ghetto Black factions at the school, and so for purposes of reaching the most students its meetings should be held on-campus. Bloods for the OCG could be recruited from those who attend its meetings. Through this organization, strikes, boycotts, and rallies could be started.

IV. SCHOOL BULLETIN

A Black school bulletin should immediately be started by the OCG. This should be distributed free to the Black students at the high school as often as possible and with as many pages as possible, without, of course, sacrificing quality. This bulletin would announce Black activities on and off campus, give the positions of the OCG, and aid in politicizing Black students at the school and raising their consciousness.

V. REACHING THE MASSES OF BLACK STUDENTS

Along with the school bulletin, other efforts should be made to mobilize and politicize the masses of Black students at the school. The most important thing which can be done by the OCG is the day-to-day blowing to the bloods on campus. There can be no substitute for this! At lunch time, before and after school and when possible during classroom time, discussions on topics ranging from world to school to personal problems should be encouraged by the OCG organizers. Those who appear the most interested should be encouraged to come either to the Umbrella Organization meetings or the OCG meetings or both. BLACK POWER! Newspapers should be sold, and other literature passed out. Discussions should be started in classrooms as much as possible, and OCG members, should press their teachers to let them lead discussion on Black Nationalism, Black History, World Problems, or other topics as they come up. When specific problems arise, such as if the OCG and the Umbrella Organization decide to key on the bad food at the cafeteria, this should be the topic that the organizers direct their attention to. Everything should be done to make the average Black student feel a part of a Black Student Confederation at the school and everything should be done to politicize him.

VI. POLITICAL CANDIDATES

The OCG should definitely run an all-Black slate of candidates for school elections, either for all offices or for the offices that the OCG considers the most important at that particular time. Coalitions and deals should be definitely be [*sic*] made with all bloods who have political power at the school already, but the OCG should shy away from making deals with white students unless it is absolutely necessary. Black students. These candidates would be directly responsible to the organization. The candidates would run on a well-thought-out ticket answering to the needs of the masses of Black students, and once in office they would continue to work for the interests of the Black students through direction from the OCG.

VII. BLACK ATHLETES UNION

Because the Black athletes are either in actuality or in potentiality the most powerful student forces at the school, attempts should be made either to neutralize them or to bring them over to the side of OCG. (It should be realized that during a riot or other disturbances among Black students these are the mercenary forces which Whitey uses to patrol the halls or otherwise quell the violence.) If there is already an athelte's union (such as Block C, etc.) the Black members should be approached and urged to take it over. The most radical members of the union should be recruited for the OCG, so that their understanding of the struggle will increase. Coalitions should be definitely be [*sic*] made with the most popular athletes and they should be urged to exert their influence to get bloods to join the OCG. Whether there is an athlete's union already or not, Black athletes at the school should be urged to start their own separate union. Special efforts should be made to politicize all Black athletes, so that if any trouble starts they will realize whose side they are really on. The threat of all the Black athletes walking off the field during a school boycott can be a very powerful weapon when negotiating with school officials, but a lot of groundwork must be laid because this is usually the most reactionary element of the high school.

VIII. SOCIAL EVENTS

The OCG should sponsor dances and other social events and should try to bring blood entertainers to the school under their name. This is an invaluable tool for getting bloods to support your cause. Also, the OCG should not overlook sponsoring special days where bloods are urged to do special things, such as bring watermelons to eat for lunch or something of that sort. By themselves these things will do nothing to further the Black Liberation Struggle, but in conjunction with the other activities suggested in this paper they can serve to keep the school administration off balance as well as increase support among the Black students at the school for the OCG. The OCG should also support any all-blood events at the school (except completely reactionary ones), and should form coalitions with Black social clubs at the schools. Remember, the more sides you hit the Black student from, the harder it will be for him to escape reality.

IX. LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS

The OCG should hold regular, on-campus lectures and discussions, if possible. Outside speakers should be invited, and the topics should be such things as Black History, Political Philosophy, and topics along those lines. World Problems would be another area to be discussed. This would be just another way of politicizing the Black students.

X. TURNING THE SCHOOL BLACK

Every symbol at the school should be turned into a Black symbol if possible, so as to further get the Black students looking to the OCG to solve his [*sic*] problems and to further increase his [*sic*] identification with the other Black students at the school. The OCG should organize, or get the bloods themselves to organize Black functions in the areas in which they are interested. Black talent productions, bongo drummer corps, theatrical groups, etc.; all should be organized and pushed up tempo. They can then be later used by the OCG to further hit bloods from all sides. The OCG should realize that it should put its hands in everything, as long as it will not overextend the organization and as long as by so doing it will increase the consciousness of Black students at the school. Coalitions should be made with every Black function already at the school (probably through the Umbrella Organization) and either these forces should be neutralized or brought over to the side of the OCG.

XI. ACTION

Initially, action should be taken in places where it has been determined by the OCG that Black students at the school are interested and have shown that they are willing to be committed. This commitment, of course, will have to be pushed up tempo by the OCG organizers, as stated before. The OCG must constantly come up with new areas to protest and mobilize with, so that they aren't continually calling for the same old thing such as a school boycott. Boycotts can be effective, but only if the groundwork for them is laid and only if they are used sparingly. Mass rallies are another area that can be used to good effect. One tactic could be to have 200 or 300 bloods break up to the School

Board meeting to protest a certain action. It should be remembered that no plan of action should be taken if it can be used to alienate the OCG from the masses of students. For this reason, in the initial stages of organizing anything of a mass nature should be kept to a minimum, until a sufficient amount of sympathetic forces are built around the OCG. Such action as burning the school down or jumping on white students should only be taken at later stages of the struggle, and only if the OCG is not directly involved in the rebellions (publicly). The thing the OCG must always remember is that its function is to mobilize the Black students to take over their school, only to destroy that school if the administration forces give it no alternative.

BLACK POWER!!!
A CHANGE GONNA COME!!!

About the Author...

Born to Jewish immigrant parents in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, March 3, 1938. Attended public schools, graduating from Thomas Jefferson High School in 1955 and The City College of New York in 1959 with a bachelor's degree in history.

Began teaching social studies in the New York City public schools in 1959, coming to Franklin K. Lane High School in 1961 after a tour of military service.

Became active in the United Federation of Teachers, Local 2, American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO), serving as union delegate from Lane since 1965, District 19 representative (1964–70), chapter chairman of Lane High School (1968–69), Local 2 delegate to the National AFT Convention (1967–68–69), secretary of the High School Committee (1967–70), and member of the UFT City-wide Executive Board (1968–71). In 1970, charging the union leadership with inaction on the problem of school disruption, he broke with UFT President Albert Shanker and established a dissident 1,000-member caucus of high school teachers. In 1971 he made an unsuccessful bid for the union's high school vice presidency on the issue of violence in the New York City public schools.

Lives in New York City with his wife and three children.